

Class BX8333
Book .H86I7
Copyright No.

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.

The Methodist Pulpit

Is the Lord Among Us?



D. W. C. Huntington

Is the Lord Among Us?

By

D. W. C. HUNTINGTON, D. D., LL. D.

CHANCELLOR OF NEBRASKA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY



CINCINNATI: JENNINGS AND PYE
NEW YORK: EATON AND MAINS

BX8333
.H86I7

LIBRARY of CONGRESS
Two Copies Received
APR 25 1904
Copyright Entry
Apr. 1-1904
CLASS a XXc. No.
83798
COPY B

COPYRIGHT, 1904, BY
JENNINGS AND PYE

THE LIBRARY
OF CONGRESS

TO THE READER



In the preparation of the following discourses, I have endeavored, with two exceptions, to present them as they have been extemporaneously delivered. Some illustrations have been omitted, and others have been reduced to a few sentences or words. I need not apologize for allowing myself the freedom of the pulpit; for I have sought to speak rather than to read. The sermon on "Our Bible" and that upon "Doubting," though in substance often in my thought, have never been written or delivered until now. In the selection of themes, I have chosen such as are practical rather than speculative; those which, in my judgment, are timely in view of existing conditions. If these discourses shall lead a few to study more thoroughly the subjects here so briefly discussed, they will have been useful, and that each reader may find something in them which shall prove helpful to his personal faith and his Christian living, is the prayer of

THE AUTHOR.

University Place, Neb., January 15, 1904.

CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	Has God Anything to Do with this World's Affairs?	9
II.	Consecration,	26
III.	Christians do not Live to Themselves,	40
IV.	The Sin of Fretfulness,	56
V.	Our Bible,	72
VI.	Are We All Going to Heaven?	97
VII.	God's Estimate of Man,	115
VIII.	Doubting,	132
IX.	Unbelief in Christian People,	149

I.

HAS GOD ANYTHING TO DO WITH THIS WORLD'S AFFAIRS?

"Is the Lord among us or not?"—Ex. xvii, 7.

For thousands of years the great struggle of the world was over the question of many gods or one God. Was there a multitude of divinities, each presiding over a certain portion of this world's surface and population, or was there one God who governed it all? This controversy has been the most prolonged and persistent of any in history, and is by no means ended yet. The wars it has waged, the treasure it has consumed, the lives it has sacrificed, and the misery it has entailed surpass computation.

The Hebrews were traditionally monotheists. In this they were a handful against the world. The bravest and the best of this world's hard work has been done by minorities. In this respect it is now as it was in the days of Noah and of the twelve apostles.

But it is not easy to keep minorities up to their distinguishing principles. The pressure of numbers is in itself very great, carrying with it popular favor or scorn. There were plenty of Protestants in the time of Henry VIII, who were Roman Catholics again in the reign of Queen Mary. So with the Hebrews; the selfish wavered and lapsed, and the weak halted between two opinions.

The Hebrews called their God Jehovah; the very name laid claim to the universe. In the pantheon of heathenism there were gods of the hills, and gods of the valleys; there was a god of flies, and a god of wine; and so on indefinitely. The world was in its youth. It lived in the visible. The claims of the gods had to be settled by external tests. In the trial of miracles the gods of Egypt had fallen before the Jehovah of Israel.

But a severer pressure than that of numbers or Egyptian power was upon the people of Israel. The Gentile nations had visible representations of their gods. Their gods were enshrined in images and sacred animals. They ate and drank; they spake in oracles; and occasionally showed themselves to their worshipers. The Hebrews were forbidden to make unto themselves any graven image with which to represent their God![1] They were to believe

[1] Ex. xx, 4.

in One whom they could not see. This was a strain upon their faith. They wanted something to look at which should to them mean God. The severity of this trial may be inferred from the fact that, to this day, there are those who seriously think that a visible Christ would be nearer and more accessible than an unseen Savior.

The miracles in Egypt had been witnessed; the sea had been divided; the manna had fallen; and now, as they drank from the smitten rock, they doubtingly say to one another, "Is Jehovah among us or not?" "Does this really show that the personal presence of Jehovah is with us?" "Has no other god a hand in this?" "Is there no secret cause, unexplained to us, for this remarkable occurrence?"

This questioning is chiefly important to us as revealing a tendency to doubt the presence of a personal God in the affairs of the world. This tendency appears in much of the subsequent history of the Hebrew people. Their doubt grew to denial; it led to their frequent falls into idolatry; it wrecked their nationality and scattered them among the nations. Had this tendency disappeared with the fall of the Hebrew monarchy, it might be passed as a strange fact of Old World history. But it still

exists. Over and again men doubtingly inquire whether God has anything to do with the history and life of this world. From lip to lip of scientist and philosopher and magazine-reader the question is passed, "Is the Lord among us or not?"

WE NOTE THIS TENDENCY IN SOME OF ITS MORE COMMON FORMS. *First.* It is seen in the efforts and evident desires of many to explain, if possible, the existence and phenomena of the material universe without assigning a personal God as the efficient cause. They speak of "the system of nature" as if that of itself was sufficient to explain all the mysteries of matter and motion and force. Power and rational order are supposed, somehow, to reside in what they call nature. They tell us what nature does and how it works. With them nature is a system of things wholly apart from God. They think of it as going on by its own direction and inherent forces. If they allow to the Creator any part in the make-up of the physical universe, it is that of a mere architect and mechanic. He made the world and set it running; since which time He has been practically absent from it. The plan of the worlds, once drawn, they run on by their own self-contained energies, and the Creator is dispensed with as of no further necessity.

To justify this doubting tendency, "natural law"

is brought in, and the claim of Almightiness is set up in its behalf. "Laws of nature" are treated as if entities in themselves. We are told what they do, and how they do it. They build worlds and control their motions; they create and maintain order and uniformity in the heavens and the earth; in short, they do all that is done in the physical universe. With this class of doubters all phenomena are explained by naming the "laws" which are supposed to be in operation in order to produce them. By this wise philosophy, God is imprisoned within the walls of his own laws or banished altogether from his creation.

All this is, to say the least, superficial thinking. It is as unphilosophical as it is unscriptural. Every mind capable of carrying on a logical process is compelled to affirm a first cause. That cause is not *nature,* for nature causes nothing. It is not *natural law,* for natural law is but a name for the uniformity of Divine action. We have observed this uniformity, and so we call it law. It denotes a way in which God is pleased to act. In itself and apart from God it has no power; it does nothing; *it is nothing.* When we have discovered natural law we have merely found out how God does things. And shall we say that God does not do things just because we

have discovered how He does them? Strictly, all power is will-power. If it were possible to subtract from nature the all-pervading energy of God nothing would remain. Nature is not mere machinery, endowed with power of perpetual motion. A deep student of nature well says: "No dead mechanism moves the stars, or lifts the tides, or calls the flowers from their sleep; truly this is the garment of the Deity; and here is the awful splendor of the perpetual Presence."[2] "The habits of God are the laws of the world."

Second. Another manifestation of this tendency to atheistic doubt is seen in the notion that God was once more really and emphatically in the world than He is now. This class of doubters have a belief in a Supreme Being and in the Bible. They are ready to admit that, in the ages past, God came into this world's affairs, and that He wrought wonderful works. They believe the time was when He was on fields of battle; that His interposing hand wrought victory or defeat. They think that He once brought judgments upon godless nations; that He had to do with famines and pestilences and all forms of natural evil. They are sure that, long ago, the Almighty thwarted or overruled the wicked ambitions of men,

[2] Quoted in Methodist Review, lxxx, p. 529.

and that He seemed to manage the world much more vigorously then than now. They tell us what remarkable things were done in "old Bible times." They have no doubt that God was in Hebrew history; they sigh for like evidences that He is present in history now.

To them God seems more distant and more silent than He is represented as being in the Scriptures. They doubt if the Lord is among us as He was with the Israelites. Now battles are decided by the skill of the commanders, the courage of soldiers, and by the quality of their arms. If God has anything to do with them, He is painfully out of sight.

It is true that many wonderful events are recorded in Bible history, revealing the presence of God among men, which we do not now see repeated. But it does not follow that, if the Lord is among *us,* He will be manifsted in precisely the same manner in which He revealed Himself to men thousands of years ago. God is wise enough to adapt His methods to the age and changing conditions of the race. Would that all religious teachers were wise enough to follow the example. There are different dispensations, but the same Lord. "There are diversities of operation, but it is the same God which worketh all in all."[3] It is not true that God has noth-

[3] 1 Cor. xii, 6.

ing to do with that which men do. Divine and human agency do not work separately and in turn. God works with and in men. Providence is chiefly in the realm of mind. The skill of a commander, the bravery of soldiers or a panic in an army may have its cause in the unseen. To the thoughtful of this generation, it would add nothing to the evidence of the Divine Presence among men, if external nature should be made to echo His voice. History shows that there is a conservation of the Divine energy.

In the supreme fact of the presence of God in the world all ages are the same. His modes of manifestation change with changing conditions; but all times are "Bible times." The difference between Bible history and other histories is not that God was in the events recorded in one, but not in those written in the other. He is equally present *in both.* Bible history is peculiar only in the standpoint of the writers. They wrote from the upper side. Could the history of the United States be written with the same degree of spiritual insight, it would be seen to be as fully permeated with Divine interpositions as is any of the history which is bound into our Bibles. No country, no people has ever held a monopoly of God's presence. He discloses Himself in and through all history. No doubt God was

at Jericho and Ai and Beth-horon, but no more than He was at Poitiers and Waterloo and Gettysburg.

It can hardly have escaped the notice of any Bible reader that the movement in the Divine dispensations is away from the material towards the spiritual—from the symbolical to the real. The earlier Bible teachings were couched in symbols. The tabernacle and the Mosaic ritual were object-lessons. They were the primer of revelation. They "served unto the example and shadow of heavenly things."[4] As the world grew there was less of shadow and more of substance, for the lessons advanced. To this day ritualism represents a bygone type. As a rule, the more ceremony the less spirituality.

God gets along with as few miracles as He can. Those are most blest who have not seen the risen Jesus, and yet have believed.[5] Bible miracles are chiefly confined to a few epochal beginnings. That time is best when faith goes on without visible crutches, seeing God everywhere, and needing no miracles. The dear souls who are demanding "signs and wonders" in external nature as proofs that the Lord is among us, are wishing back a day inferior to their own. Such a day they will not see, for the wheels of the kingdom of God never go backward.

[4] Heb. xiii, 5. [5] John xx, 29.

"God has provided some better things for us."[6] It was expedient that Jesus should ascend out of human sight. He did not go away from the world; He thus came more into its life.

Third. The heathen philosophers taught that the gods took notice only of the most extraordinary events. Jesus taught that our Heavenly Father has to do with the fall of a sparrow. The tendency to look at this subject after the manner of the heathen is very manifest. Many Christians do not recognize God in common things. They look for evidences of His presence only in the unusual and startling. To be an intimation of the Divine Presence, an event must be outside of all known laws; it must baffle human explanation. Or it is in those incidents which occur at critical moments in history, and which are afterwards seen to have been the hinges upon which national destinies have turned that certify to Divine agency. The coming of Blücher to Waterloo, the arrival of the *Monitor* at Hampton Roads, the rescue of the child, John Wesley, from the burning rectory; these and the like occurrences, which have involved consequences of incalculable importance, they regard as the occasional thrusts of the hand of God into this world's

[6] Heb. xi, 40.

affairs. But in things familiar to us by regular recurrence they doubt if the Lord is among us.

But why should an extraordinary event prove the presence of God any more than an ordinary one? Is it the credential of the Divine Presence to be out of an established order? "Is an event which is inside of law for that reason outside of God?"[7] Rational order in the universe is itself proof of the presence of a rational God. The fact that an event has not been frequently observed, or that it never occurred but once, adds nothing to the evidence that God has to do with it. If from the planting of a peach-pit there should come the tree, the blossom, and the ripened fruit, all in thirty minutes, it would be a very extraordinary occurrence; but if the same event should occur in three years' time, it would be an ordinary event. And can any man tell why the energy of God is necessary in order to the production of a peach in thirty minutes, but is not required for its bringing forth in three years? The processes carried on and the work accomplished are in both cases the same. All that would be creative in the work of the shorter time would be equally so in the longer period. The length of time occupied in the process has no bearing whatever upon the question as

[7] Shall We Believe in Divine Providence? p. 110.

to the part God takes in the matter. He is as potentially present in a gradual as in an instantaneous creation. For aught that we know, God works as hard to keep a living man alive as He does to raise a dead man again to life. Christ is now "the Life" as truly as He is "the Resurrection." Paley well said: "I do not see anything more in the resurrection of a dead man than in the conception of a child. . . . To the first man the succession of the species would be as incomprehensible as the resurrection of the dead is to us."[8] "The world is a Divine thought and a Divine act. Divine reason and Divine will are both expressed in all natural phenomena. The continuity of the system expresses simply the constancy of the Divine action. The uniformity of the system expresses the steadiness of the Divine purpose."[9]

REMARKS.

1. There is comparatively little avowed atheism. The absurdities of its creed forbid intellectual rest. It is such a violation of the moral intuitions that the religious nature given to man pronounces it false. But there is a practical atheism which is much more common, and more to be dreaded. There is an

[8] Evidences of Christianity, p. 653. [9] Metaphysics, Bowne, p. 265.

atheism in feeling and in sentiment; an atheism in business and in politics. There is a cold unconsciousness of God, begotten of unrighteous living and paralyzed moral sense. When we read in the fourteenth Psalm that "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God,"[10] we may note that the words "there is" are inserted by the translators. What the fool said was, "No God." It was not an expression of intellectual conviction, but of desire. He did not want any God. It was disagreeable to him to think there was a God. "No God for me," he said, and this is the worst form of atheism.

2. Political atheism is an enemy and a danger to any country. Nations are as responsible to God as are individuals. The State is a Divine institution. Every nation is raised up for a purpose; it has a providential mission to fulfill. So long as it takes its proper place and serves the progress of mankind, it is given power from on high. When it refuses to do its appointed work, and stands in the way of human well-being, it declines, and is finally overcome.

"At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down and to destroy it, if that nation against

[10] Psa. xiv, 1.

whom I have pronounced turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil I had thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom to build and to plant it, if it do evil in My sight, that it obey not My voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them."[11]

This is the decalogue of the nations. It is written by the finger of God upon the tables of history. It was no more true in the days of Jeremiah than it is in our own time. All God's prophets have testified that no nation can safely carry systems of vice, or long endure general moral corruption. There were those in the days of the prophets who said, "The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil;"[12] that is, He has nothing to do with us anyway. And there are those in our time who, with less excuse, declare that God has nothing to do with politics. The Hebrew monarchies staggered into their graves under this load of political atheism, the influence of which was then what it is now and ever will be.

3. In the light of this subject we see the character which is demanded in civil rulers. The home,

[11] Jer. xviii, 7-10. [12] Zeph. i, 12.

the Church, and the State are all and equally Divine institutions. That those who govern in the home and those who make and execute laws in the Church, should do so with supreme regard to the will of God, few will deny. The same is equally true of those who rule in the State. In the home parents represent God; in the Church ecclesiastical rulers represent Him, and civil rulers are charged with the same responsibilities in the State. "They are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing."[13] We are aware that, in modern political life, the Scriptural idea of the relation of the civil ruler to the kingdom of God is to a great extent overlooked. It nevertheless remains true that the makers and executors of human laws stand charged with their duties under the authority of God. No personal ambition, no question of self-interest can for a moment justify in officers of State a lower aim than that of serving the best interests of mankind in obedience to the Divine will. A more reckless inconsistency can scarcely be conceived than that of a man seeking political position with no higher purpose than personal profit or aggrandizement. If there is anything more godless than this it is the man who

[13] Rom. xiii, 6.

uses his office, whether civil or ecclesiastical, for the same personal ends.

4. There is a business atheism which is no better than the political. It acknowledges God in one class of duties and on one day of the week, but ignores Him in the rest. Of all the heresies extant that is most potent for evil which divides the life into sacred and secular departments. It renders business godless and devotion insincere. There is no good reason why an honest business, honestly conducted, should not be a means of grace. On the other hand, no amount of profit can make a business right which would otherwise be wrong. No stress of circumstances can render embezzlement necessary or justify fraud. "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."[14]

5. To ignore God, to doubt His presence, is the greatest blunder which can be made in individual life. God is interested in every human life. He would weave it into His Divine working. He chooses for each of us what is highest and best. He would lead us. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."[15] To ignore Him; to deny or reject Him is to part company with a Heavenly

[14] Rom. xii, 11. [15] Prov. iii, 6.

Guide, and imperil our future for both worlds at once. How bleak and barren must this life be to those who stumble on with no realization that God has to do with them and theirs! Richter has well said that this world without God is but a ghastly socket from which the eye has been removed. Whatever else we fail to do, let us not fail, in everything, to "count in God."

II.

CONSECRATION.

"I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."—Rom. xii, 1.

The writer of this epistle was a converted Jew. He had been a thorough student of the Scriptures, and he often expresses his Christian ideas by interpreting the teachings of the Old Testament. It was all the more natural for him to do this because of the typical character of the old dispensation. The Mosaic ritual inclosed a spiritual meaning, and Paul loved to point it out.

The text is an instance in which the law of sacrifice, which held such a prominent place in the Hebrew religion, is translated into its Christian significance.

The Jews divided animals into "clean" and "unclean." Those offered in sacrifice must be of the

former class. They must be taken from the herd, the flock, or the clean birds.[1] Each was required to be a perfect specimen of its kind. Diseased or blemished animals were not acceptable sacrifices.[2] To be accepted the animal must be *presented* by the worshiper—presented unto God. This was done, to be sure, through the mediating offices of the priest, but it was none the less the personal act of the offerer. When performed in the spirit enjoined by the law, it was a transaction between the offerer and God.

Christianity has no priests save our "Great High Priest, who has passed through the heavens,"[3] and no atoning sacrifice can now be offered. But consecratory sacrifices are essential to Christian experience and life. Every man is in duty bound to present himself unto God as a sacrifice. He is to be a *whole,* a holy sacrifice. He is not to be slain in his act of consecration; he is to be a continual, a living sacrifice. In the ceremonial of the Mosaic law, the blood poured out meant surrender of life—surrender of all. The form has passed away, but its meaning abides. Consecration of life with all it contains is and ever must be essential to living Christianity.

[1] Lev. i, 1–14. [2] Lev. xi, 47. [3] Heb. iv, 14.

I. BUT WHAT IS THIS CONSECRATION?

1. It is something which *we do;* not something done *for us.* It is our own voluntary act and state. We do not mean that it is ever done without the gracious persuasion of the Holy Spirit; but we do mean that it is our doing; not that of another. Neither men nor angels, no, nor God Himself, can do it in our stead. If it were possible that others could do this for us, we should be none the better for their doing. It can not be done by any influence around us or upon us. Teaching may show us the duty; surroundings may serve as persuading and urging influences; but personal consecration is our own self-determined activity. We consecrate ourselves if we are ever consecrated. Prayer for the illumination of the Holy Spirit in our darkness, and for His help in our weakness is certainly very proper; but prayer for consecration as that for which we are to wait in passive expectation till the gift is bestowed, will never be answered. That is asking God to do what He tells us to do. God will consecrate us when we consecrate ourselves.

2. Consecration does not consist in an intellectual apprehension of the duty itself. Knowledge of duty underlies all intelligent religious activity; but in itself it falls short of the essential element in con-

secration. The duty may be seen clearly, and yet the mind remain unchanged in its attitude of self-will. We may apprehend the rightness of the obligation; we may perceive something of the beauty and richness of consecrated life, and still fail to present ourselves unto God. With our heads full of light, we may refuse to offer ourselves as living sacrifices.

3. Nor is consecration any form of the religious feelings. It is not feeling badly; it is not getting happy. Consecration may exist with rapture, and it may just as fully exist without it. It is not to be identified with intensity of desire for it is not desire at all. It is not desiring to do something; it is not desiring that God would do something. It is not wishing that something were done nor hoping that something may be done. It is not getting ready to do something nor being willing to do something; *it is actually doing something.* The reality of this self-dedication can not be too much emphasized. Musing, meditating, an awakened sentiment, a passing mood, a pious wish, not one, not all these rise to the meaning of "living sacrifice." Consecration is business with God. It gets to Him through Christ. The marriage covenant is not more real than that into which a consecrated soul enters with God. In a soul's consecration, something is done.

4. Consecration is not giving to God what did not belong to him before. It is not conferring favors upon Him by donating to Him liberal per cents of our time and worldly substance. Consecration concedes God's right to all we have and are, and acts upon the fact. Jonathan Edwards wrote in his private diary, "I have this day been before God, so that I am not in any respect my own. I claim no right to myself. I have given myself clear away, and have retained nothing as my own."[4] To what a sublime height does this self-devotion rise above a cold division of profits with God, or a devotional feeling awakened by the atmosphere of a religious meeting. The truly consecrated soul regards himself as having wronged his Lord in everything in which he has failed to recognize His right to all, and looks upon his consecration as the beginning of his obedience to God.

5. Consecration is, in its own nature, entire up to the measure of light. With different persons, the subject may be seen with very different degrees of comprehension. With the same persons, at successive periods in life and experience, the matter will be differently viewed. Time, study, and spiritual growth bring deeper insight. Consecration thus

[4] Journal, January 12, 1723.

means more; it includes more in some cases than in others, but *it can never mean or include in any case less than all.* With a conscious reservation, consecration is vitiated and ceases to be more than a name.

The content of the living sacrifice may vary with individuals. The child has only the powers of a child to present, and this is the all which is required of the child. The man in years, his youth wasted, reduced by sinful life to a fraction of what he might have been, when he presents his little all unto God, it is a sacrifice, holy and acceptable. Nothing more to him is possible; nothing more can be his reasonable service. No man, no angel could do more, however much each might have to offer. Consecration may thus vary in its *content;* it can never vary in its *intent.* Differ it may in breadth and depth of apprehended meaning, as widely as individuals differ, but entire, as opposed to partial, is all the consecration there is.

Consecration is entire also in the sense that it takes in all time. In purpose it offers the future as well as the present. A member once said to his pastor that he had consecrated ten of the best years of his life to the Lord. Eight of these years had already passed, so that in two more years his con-

secration would run out. He evidently thought he had been very generous with his Lord, and that therefore he deserved well at the hands of his Maker.

True consecration knows no periods of service. In its deepest intent it includes all of life in this world and in all worlds. It is the human side of "the everlasting covenant." The implication that it is ever to terminate vitiates it from the beginning. Vows devoting certain things to God, sometimes with and sometimes without conditions, were practiced in the times of the patriarchs and judges; but there is no authority for them under the Christian revelation. They do not rise to the plane of Christian consecration.

Nor is consecration something to be used merely as a condition of reaching something else. It is a state of mind which leaves with God all consequences in this world and the next, whether they refer to outward conditions or inward experiences. Its eye is single. In its purpose and consent it carries with it the whole being to God. So long as the mind dwells upon what it is going to receive through or because of its consecration, it will be defeated in its self-abnegation and embarrassed in its faith. It will be held down to the process of bargaining.

Genuine consecration means to be wholly and forever right with God. There is no room for a piecemeal offering in the matter. There is no place for stipulations or questionings. There is not an "if" in the whole vocabulary of consecration. It voices one continuous and willing "amen" to all God is, to all He does, and to all He requires.

6. Consecration belongs in Christian character as such. It is not the peculiar duty or privilege of a few; it is vital to real Christian experience. It is not optional with Christians to choose a consecrated life and thus reach high attainments, or to remain in an unconsecrated state and live on a lower level of salvation. A misguided member once said to her pastor, "I claim to be a Christian; but I do not profess to be a consecrated Christian." And, pray, what is an unconsecrated Christian? Possibly this woman did not mean all that her words would indicate. If she did, she must have meant that she was a Christian only in theory and name. "I want to be more fully consecrated;" "I consecrated myself to God some years ago, but recently I have made a full consecration." These statements may be very honestly made; but how far can they be intelligently and correctly made? (1) They may mean that, under the searching light of the Divine Spirit,

persons were led to see that they were not in a state of consecration, as they had supposed themselves to be. This experience is by no means unusual. (2) They may mean that time and increasing light had shown them a deeper and higher meaning in this state than they had ever before apprehended. This is well nigh the universal experience with living Christians, but if it be meant that entire consecration to Christ is not essential to an average, but real experience of saving grace, and is necessary only to such as would attain "the higher life," the statement contains a subtle, but serious, error. Honest differences of opinion may exist as to what consecration requires in outward life, views of the subject may be narrow or broad, superficial or profound, but up to the measure of his light, every Christian presents himself a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.

7. Consecration to God is also consecration to the welfare of man. It is not a state to be merely possessed and enjoyed and talked about. It goes forth in self-sacrificing activity. It labors for that for which Christ labors. It has hands and feet and tongue, all in motion for human well-being. Consecrated souls can travel poor circuits, go to mission fields, visit slums, and never say that anything

is hard. They do not settle questions of duty by what is easiest and most agreeable to themselves. They do not "bargain with the Master for an easy place, nor commute for half fare and a berth in a sleeping-car."[5] They willingly ache that others may suffer less. They work on alone if need be, more anxious to serve human interests than to secure credit for so doing. They can do little things, if thereby blessings come to others. "Go," said Mary Lyon to her pupils at Holyoke, "where nobody else is willing to go."[6] Consecration lives by loving service. It seeks the good of universal being. No field is too foreign if so be it may be reached. It gives its best to those who are degraded and forgotten. It sees in every man a neighbor. Its zeal is not cooled by the repulsiveness of sin, nor inflamed by the attractiveness of a chosen few. It breaks through the barriers of circle and society. It serves God as God, and man as man. It works independently of all motives, save the highest well-being of all. It can work without human praise, and hold on its way in the absence of visible results or tidal-waves of prompting emotion.

8. It should be noted that consecration to the highest good of man, according to the will of God, is

[5] Christianity in the Home, p. 204. [6] *Ibid.*

obedience to God. It is making choice of that which He chooses. The first act of consecration is the first moment of obedience; it is the first moment in which the soul can honestly say to God, "Not my will, but Thine be done."

It should not be supposed, however, that, by one act of consecration, the work is ended for a lifetime. It is the soul's entrance upon a state of obedience. Obedience is always a duty, and that state is, by Divine grace, to be constantly maintained. Here is the fighting-line of the Christian. Here we meet the solicitations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. To constancy of obedience are we called. This beginning of obedience must become a *sustained consecration of life*. This is not accomplished by a few good resolutions; it is not spending a few moments in devotional exercises; it is a plane of life far above pious spasms; it is a life of fiber and effect; it is dwelling with God and living for man.

REMARKS.

1. To a state of consecration saving faith becomes natural. The difficulties which men experience in the exercise of faith are not in faith itself; they are behind it. Sin creates fear and dread of

God, and in such a state of mind trust is impossible. Once conscious that the whole will of God is willingly accepted, faith in God through Christ becomes a normal exercise of the mind. Without such an acceptance of the will of God, efforts to believe unto salvation become the wrestling agonies of the soul. And they are as unavailing as they are painful.

2. To the consecrated soul duty becomes a delight. He is in harmony with the Divine will, and wants it done on earth as it is in heaven. He is satisfied with the law of God, and would not have it changed. He is at home in God's service. To one who is attempting to perform religious duties while in an unconsecrated state, the task is irksome and dreaded. As a rule, the effort will be soon abandoned. The unregenerate, in the Church or out, look upon religious life as drudgery. It seems to them a kind of penance which Christians are enduring in order to get to heaven. The deception arises from their false and rebellious attitude towards God. They are pitting their wills against His. But to one who accepts the will of God, actively and passively, obedience to God and service to man are both liberty and delight.

3. Christian consecration is manifested in a

Christlike spirit, and in unassuming activity for the benefit of others. This is the evidence which convinces onlookers. Very little impression for good is generally made upon others by personal profession of entire consecration. If the experience be real, men will divine the fact without being told. When the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians is translated into a Christian life, it will not long go unrecognized, and the influence will be all the more salutary if it be coupled with humility and modesty.

4. The time for consecration is *now*. It is a voluntary state, and can be entered at once. All our pretenses of preparing to begin consecrated lives are only excuses for neglecting a duty which we should discharge at once. All waiting for God to do something more than He is doing, or for others to do or become different, or for conditions to change, are only makeshifts seemingly to relieve you from this most pressing obligation. You say the greatest and the best thing possible for you is to have His help now. He will never help you more than He does now. You say it is a great thing thus to enter into a solemn dedication of your all to God. So it is, and you should make haste to do the greatest and the best thing possible for you, in time or eternity—present your bodies a living sac-

rifice, holy, acceptable unto God. No matter where you are. You may be in your home while you read these lines. Your home is a good place in which to begin this only real life. You have no need or right to wait for something special in your privileges or surroundings. Admiral Foote, when a midshipman, while walking the deck of his vessel on a starless night, voiced his self-consecration in the words, "Henceforth I live for God."[7] At that hour his whole life swung into line with God, and so he remained to the end of his useful career. On the night of his twenty-second birthday, Charles Kingsley wrote, "Before the sleeping earth and the sleepless sea and stars, I have devoted myself to God, a vow never to be recalled."[8] This personal consecration was the crisis in the lives of these great and good men. It will be the turning-point in yours. It opens the heart to the Holy Spirit. The world never looks to one afterwards as it did before. Its deceptions are exposed, and the power of its fascination is broken. The nearness and loving mercy of God, the infinite value of man, the heinousness of sin, and the glory of salvation overshadow, in their stupendous importance, all other realities. *Your time is now.*

[7] Homiletic Review, xi, p. 213. [8] *Ibid.*

III.

CHRISTIANS DO NOT LIVE TO THEMSELVES.

"For none of us liveth to himself."—Rom. xiv, 7.

It is evident that the apostle did not mean to be understood as saying that there are no persons in the world who live to themselves. He knew the world too well ever to have made such a statement as that. There is a sense in which every life touches and influences others, and is thus not wholly within itself; but that is not the subject which is discussed in this chapter. Paul is seeking to correct certain evils which were disturbing believers in his time, and which arose out of too exclusive regard for individual opinions and technical rights. He insists that Christians do not make that which is personal to them the supreme motive of their lives. They live for the highest good of all. They live and die for that for which Christ lived and died.

He allows that good men may differ widely in

many things and yet be equally accepted of God. The Jew may keep his feast-days for conscience' sake. He thus keeps them unto the Lord. The Gentile may neglect them altogether, but must not, for that reason, be judged a sinner. One may refuse certain meats from the conviction that it would be sin to partake of them. Another may eat them at will without scruple or condemnation. (Verse 3.) Both may be serving God; both are accepted of Him. One must not judge the other.

But the apostle insists that, with the possibility of all these differences among Christians, there is one respect in which they do not differ—they do not live to themselves. "None of *us*," he says, "liveth to himself." Christian life and self-centered life are opposites and mutually exclusive. Life in which self-interest or self-pleasing is the ruling factor is not Christian life. He is a Christian who lives unto the Lord; chooses what the Lord chooses; lives for the end which He seeks.

I. WITH US ALL THERE ARE POINTS OF DANGER IN THE DIRECTION OF THIS SELF-CENTERED LIFE.

1. We bring into the world an inheritance of animal nature. We are thus compelled to begin our activity under the law of self-gratification. Appe-

tite develops in advance of the idea of duty. We act from inherited impulse and awakened appetite before we know any higher law. When the fact of obligation becomes known and the idea of duty is developed, there is a conflict between the suggestions of appetite and the claims of duty. The first habit ever formed is in the unconscious surrender to the principle of self-indulgence. Activity has taken that direction, and the life has become quickly organized under the rule of self-pleasing.

To become Christian in the New Testament sense, this rule of self-gratification must be renounced and broken. There must be conscious, voluntary acceptance of the claims of duty as expressed in the will of God. To continue Christian this reversed attitude of the mind must be maintained. The change is a radical one. It is a change of masters. The reign of self is broken and the will of Christ is installed as the law of our activity. There is danger that, having begun under the law of self-gratification, we shall refuse to make the change. Having made the change, the clamor of appetite still exists, and there is danger that we may again fall under its solicitations. There is danger that we may be bribed by the world or decoyed by the flesh

and the devil. Primitive bent and habit are overcome only through the abounding grace of Christ.

2. Danger exists in the fact that we are compelled to live in the atmosphere of selfish life. There is much of social life in which the many live for no higher end than self-pleasing. Self-interest is largely king in the business world. It organizes trusts, and "corners" fuel and bread-stuffs. It sells whisky and drinks whisky for greed and self-indulgence. It seduces and betrays that it may gratify lust. It cheats, and then says, "That was his look-out; I am not running his business." It breaks the commandments of God and justifies the sin by the fact that "there is money in it." It says, "I know it is not just right, but it pays well; we must all have a living, you know." It practices what Satan preached when he said to Jesus, "Command that these stones be made bread;" that is, "God has left you forty days without bread; He may leave you to starve; you must have a living you know, and if you can not get it in God's time and way, get it in your own; any way, so that you get a living." In public affairs self-life too often makes personal interests rather than the general good its supreme object. The schoolhouse must not be built,

however much it may be needed, because taxes will be increased. The Church must be placed where it will suit personal convenience, or, perchance, enhence the value of certain portions of real estate. Self-life ofttimes runs riot in political affairs. Not, who is the ablest and best man, but, "What will he do for me?" Not, should the law be passed, but, "How much is there in it?"

These and such like manifestations show us that selfishness is in the air. There is danger that men will continue to yield to its enticements, and that Christians will drift away from an unselfish consecration of life. None but healthy bodies resist atmospheric influences. Living in the atmosphere of self-centered life, Christians and Churches must be wholly and persistently consecrated or they will absorb the contagion. Vocations may be easily accepted from which selfish gains are gotten, but which do not serve the well being of society. Legitimate business may be carried on by unfair and dishonest methods. Such business life is selfish; it is unchristian. Do we call our money our own? Do we use it as we please, without reference to the claims of God or the welfare of our fellows? Then are we living to ourselves. Do we spend it freely upon our tastes or appetites, but very sparingly, if

at all, upon that which promotes the higher and wider interests of mankind—the school, the Church and its various benevolences? Then are we still held in the grip of the old life of self. There is danger here.

3. This danger is increased by the fact that living unto one's self is quite commonly regarded as not essentially wicked. It is never commended, never justified in others, but by many seems to be looked upon more as an inevitable defect of human nature than as any state which involves sin. The human mind is incapable of approving selfish acts; it is compelled by its own laws to approve and even admire that which is truly benevolent. And yet supreme regard for personal interest or pleasure, in disregard of universal well-being, passes as involving at most but a slight blur upon Christian character.

The fact is, living to self and refusing to live unto the Lord, is the one all-comprehensive sin. It is that which distinguishes a sinner from a saint. Its manifestations may be various, but supreme regard for self-pleasing comprehends them all. Archbishop Trench tells us that the *word* selfishness is young, but that "the *thing* is as old as the devil."[1]

[1] Study of Words, p. 144.

He thinks it possible that the tempter of our first parents was moved to his wicked suggestions by the fear that man, if left in obedience, would rise to be chief among the creatures of God, and thus outrank him. If Satan sought personal aggrandizement by planning the overthrow of a rival, he did only what human beings have done many times since he lived to himself; that was all. And if the first woman chose the gratification of her curiosity and her appetite rather than obedience to the command of God, she did the same thing on a less-elevated plane.

This self-centered life is the bottom element in all forms of crime. The swindler, the burglar, the seducer, the murderer, commits his crime in order to realize the gratification of his own desire. He refuses all care for the rights or interests of others. The particular form which his self-centered life takes on we call crime; but underneath all its forms is the same supreme concentration upon himself. Every criminal law was made for the purpose of restraining and punishing those who refuse to regard the rights of others, and insist on making their own desires the supreme law and end of their lives.

4. The danger of falling into this open gulf of life unto self is increased by the fact that there are

types of religious teaching which serve to strengthen and foster the evil, rather than to uproot it. Motives are often brought to bear upon men to induce them to take steps towards a Christian life, which are simply appeals to their selfishness. They are told how happy they will be if they will make a start in religion. They are pointed to their failure to realize happiness in the directions in which they have sought it. They are exhorted to try this good way of getting happy, which has never failed. If men believe and act upon such considerations only, their self-life will remain unchanged. They will be still getting something for themselves. If they are told to give themselves to the Lord, so long as they understand this to be merely an expedient for getting something from Him, real self-renunciation will be impossible. The religiousness of such will consist in a religious dress upon the old self-life.

Persons are told that if they will only become Christians they will, besides escaping a horrible and wrathful destiny in the world to come, have a share in the best and most beautiful place in the universe, after they can stay here on earth no longer. To those who have spent their energies in getting the best things possible for themselves, this becomes a fascinating view. They have not to change the

radical aim of their lives; they have only to turn it in a different direction. They are still getting something for themselves. Their religious life exhausts itself in getting and holding on to the evidences that they are going to heaven when they die.

It is far from our thought to make little of the awful future of the finally impenitent; nor would we for a moment treat with indifference that day of wondrous glory in which "the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."[2] These are great truths to be preached, and, if possible, appreciated. But we do contend that the state of mind in which thought and desire are centered and absorbed in securing a personal gain, is not a state admitting of genuine repentance or consecration. It is a state which makes no room for God. At its core it is the old self-life turned into a religious channel. Persons led into the Christian profession under the sway of this self-profiting motive very soon betray the superficial character of their change. Their Church life is conducted on the principle of getting what they can from the Church for their own benefit, rather than of giving their lives for the promotion of its evangelizing work. They are not willing and joyful givers of their

[2] Matt. xiii, 43.

substance, for they have never given away themselves. They are sensitive to any want of recognition or appreciation. If moved to activity, it must be by some inducement which, directly or indirectly, touches self-interest. It will not be strange if they, unconsciously to themselves, seek to make their religion itself a form of self-indulgence. They know little or nothing of self-denial. Their ultimate object is to get to heaven, and they want to be religiously happy as evidence that they are on the way to heaven. They want to make sure of getting to that land of rest and music and companionship with those who have gone on before. They like a religious meeting in which they have "a good time." They like preaching which makes them feel good. In class-meeting they seldom get above or beyond how they feel and how they enjoy themselves. They are wont to estimate the piety of others by their degree of emotional fervor. Their prayers cling tenaciously to what is nearest to themselves. What wonder that many in the Church are as worldly and as penurious as before their religious profession! They are attempting to be Christians for gain. They have never been brought to love what God loves. They still live to themselves, though practicing some religious duties. They have been misled, and their

peril lies in the fact that they do not discriminate between self-renunciation and awakened religiousness. They do not see that the rule of self-life, in whatever form, is incompatible with genuine piety.

5. We are not maintaining that one's own interest should have no place in his activity. We insist only that it should be held in its proper place; that it should be regarded according to its relative value. No individual interest is of equal value with the highest good of all. So say our civil courts; so says the Bible. No man has the right to make of himself a supreme end. He is a part of a greater whole. His rights are limited by the general welfare; his interests are subordinated to the highest well-being of all. He is to love God supremely, and his neighbor as himself. Self-life would reverse this command, so that it would read, "Thou shalt love thyself supremely, and God and thy neighbor not at all."

6. This view is supported by the fact that living unto self proves the ruin of the highest and best powers of man. It arrests development in the direction of all that is noblest and best. Self-consciousness in an orator insures his failure. Till he is sufficiently interested in some object outside of himself to render him self-forgetful, his gifts will

fail him, though trained in all the arts of the schools. No poet can command his muse so long as the end he seeks is money or fame. Inspiration never comes till it can displace self-consciousness. A prize of five thousand dollars was once offered for the best poem which should epitomize the history of American slavery, the object being to install the production as a new national hymn. In a year's time the committee of award examined upwards of two thousand manuscripts, but only to report that not one of them was of sufficient merit to take rank as a national hymn. The wealthy Quaker who offered the prize replied, "I am afraid those poets were first of all after the five thousand dollars." If his judgment was correct, the secret of their failure was revealed. No poet, whatever his gifts, could write appreciatively of slavery so long as his object was gain. The poet of slavery would have to feel in himself its unutterable woes. The agonies of the slave would have to enter his own soul. But self-centered life can not take on the sorrows of others. A poem must be born, and there is no motherhood in the life unto self. Ministerial abilities and usefulness often decline from the same cause. The pastor who occupies a field of labor for what he can get out of it, rather than for what he hopes to do

for it, is stricken with mental and spiritual paralysis. It matters not whether the field is one to be desired or to be dreaded; it matters just as little what natural or acquired abilities the preacher brings to it; no power from on high will overshadow him till he is able to say, "I seek not yours, but you."[3] But when, in unselfish consecration to the welfare of his people, he loves as Jesus loved, the fire of God will move his teeming thoughts and flame from his willing lips. The greatest and best possibilities of any man can not be developed under the rule of selfish life.

The same law holds in reference to religious experience. A self-regarding state of mind, though taking the form of personal piety, is superficial and unhealthful. No man has any right to make his own spiritual excellence his supreme end. The higher life does not lie in that direction. All Christian attainments are for service, not for personal possession and enjoyment. They are means to a higher end. Religious experience "to have and to hold" eludes its would-be possessor. Holiness, like happiness and heaven, is missed by making it the supreme object of pursuit. "He who, wishing to be a saint, strives only to be a saint, will never, so

[3] 2 Cor. xii, 14.

striving, become a saint."[4] There is danger that the old getting attitude may intrude itself here. Self-life is a subtle fiend; it can wear the garb of necessity or of prudence or of piety. A devoted missionary once wrote an article on "The Idolatry of Christian Experience." The title is strikingly suggestive. Spiritual power, like force in nature, is known only in its effects. The Christian who thinks himself possessed of large measures of spiritual power, and yet nothing comes of it, is mistaken. He has identified spiritual power with his own feelings. Those most blest with the might of the Spirit are often least conscious of the fact. Spiritual power is the result of getting into line with God, not persuading Him to come into line with us.

The law of all degrees of spiritual life is the law of self-sacrifice. This is not sacrificing *for* self; it is the sacrifice *of* self. There is a legendary saying that the clay of which man was originally made was moistened with tears. It suggests the truth that the one ground virtue from which all other virtues spring is the sacrifice of self. "He who in time is nearest Christ crucified will in eternity be nearest Christ glorified."[5] The life of Jesus stands as the

[4] Permanent Elements in Religion, p. 38.

[5] Morison, Commentary on Mark, p. 295.

one perfect instance of holy self-sacrifice, and we are Christians in the degree in which we are like Him. He gave, He suffered, He died, and all for others. He died, not only on the cross; He died all the way down to the cross. "He saved others" was the great truth concerning Him, unwittingly confessed by those who mocked Him. More wonderful than His miracles was this undeviating devotion of Himself to the welfare of others. "Let that mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."[6]

REMARKS.

1. Self-centered life is everywhere the great disturber of human happiness. It defeats itself and keeps its victims forever upon the rack. It collides with others' interests, and God is in its way. It destroys the peace of the home. It leads husbands to be indifferent or unkind to their wives, and wives to regard their husbands only as the chief of their own conveniences. It underlies suits for divorce. It leads children to demand that the whole of the family arrangements shall be managed with reference to their personal pleasure. It breeds social jealousies and neighborhood quarrels; it breaks up Church choirs; scrambles for the chief seats in the synagogues, and sets Church members to praying,

[6] Phil. ii, 5.

"Lord, grant that we may sit on Thy right hand and on Thy left in Thy kingdom."[7] It leads Diotrephes to love the pre-eminence. It is to the credit of the religion of Christ that selfishness can not live in peace with it.

2. A word to that reader who is not a Christian: Do you not see, in the light of this subject, the reason why you are not a Christian? It is not because you are not sufficiently orthodox; it is not because the Church members in your vicinity do not live as they should; it is not any one of the subterfuges by which you have sought to relieve yourself from the duty of immediate repentance. The reason is one, and can not be more. It is that you started out in your life under the law of self-pleasing, and, up to this time, you have refused to change and accept the law of duty. You have insisted on having your way instead of taking God's way. Had you reversed your attitude, ceased living to please yourself, and honestly sought to please God, you would have found Christ and Christ would have found you long ago. And now, if, while you read this page, you will tell God in your heart of hearts that He shall have His way with you henceforth and forever, you will find a forgiving Savior while this book is in your hand.

[7] Mark x, 37.

IV.

THE SIN OF FRETFULNESS.

"Cease from anger and forsake wrath; fret not thyself in any wise to do evil."—Psa. xxxvii, 8.

King David was an old man when he wrote this psalm. He says, "I have been young, and now am old."[1] His life had been an eventful one. His experiences had been more varied than often come to one man. He had a hardy boyhood. He knew the exposures of a shepherd, and the snares which surround a courtier. From a shepherd-boy he became king of one of the greatest nations of the time. He fought more battles than Hannibal or Napoleon. He was a statesman, a poet, and a reformer.

When young he was but little thought of in his father's family. When a prophet announced to Jesse that there was a predestined king among his sons, the father had not one thought that this honor could fall upon David. In his public life he was in turn loved and hated, admired and envied, trusted and

[1] Psa. xxxvii, 25.

betrayed. He had felt the sufferings of a hunted fugitive, while for years he was hiding from his king with a price upon his head. He had walked among the subtle dangers of being petted by a nation and courted by neighboring rulers. His life seems never to have been out from under some severe strain. To him promises and prophecies were delayed in their fulfillment; wealth, success, and popularity tried his bravery more severely than battle. He was compelled to know the great deeps of domestic sorrow, and he sounded the profoundest depths of shame and penitence in view of personal sin. This much is certain: David had his full share of the difficulties, the vexations, and the cutting trials of human life.

When such a man speaks to us from his mature years and wide experience, he is entitled to a hearing. His words are messages which we need. This is not the only psalm in which he admits that he had felt keenly the temptations to murmuring, anger, and fretfulness. He knew that earnest life would bring the same to all who would come after him, and out of the chastened spirit of an aged saint, just entering the sunset of life, he warns us against giving place to an irritated and fretful state of mind.

I. WE, TOO, HAVE OUR TEMPTATIONS TO FRETFULNESS.

1. Temptations to this sin may arise from bodily conditions. An overtaxed nervous system will furnish a ready occasion for irritability of temper. Improper habits of eating, producing indigestion and sleeplessness, beget fretful feelings. Referring to his chronic dyspepsia, Thomas Carlyle said, "When Satan, in the form of bile, was heavy upon me, I have said cruel things, and bitterly, though vainly, do I recollect them."[2] Coated stomachs and torpid livers have often clouded the minds and depressed the spirits of persons both good and bad. Men who work when they should sleep, eat by no rule but appetite, and use tobacco and beer, will fall into depression and ill temper at least half the time. Not a few of God's dear children worry over their frequent wrestlings with the unbelieving suggestions of the devil, when the fiends which they should most resolutely resist are late hours, mince pies, and plum puddings. Such is the influence of physical states upon the mind that feelings of despondency and discouragement naturally arise from bodily disorders. They multiply fears and change the color of everything. They breed jealousies, and

[2] Froude's Life of Carlyle, i, 147.

lead to hard words and lawsuits. Many good people would enjoy religion much more than they do if they would shape their habits to wholesome rules in dietetics. Neglected and abused, our bodies turn upon us with scorpion stings. In this day of light there is such a thing as Christian health. A sanctified soul in an unsanctified body, if indeed it is possible, is certainly superficial.

2. In some constitutions there is an excessive love of order which may furnish the temptation to fretfulness. So far as this is a constitutional trait, it is in itself innocent, but it opens the way for unnumbered annoyances. Persons of a mathematical turn are especially exposed in this direction. They love system and exactness. They can not easily bear what is heedless or disorderly. Work done without rigid method pains and disgusts them. They care little for shade-trees and cornfields if the rows are not straight. So much of this world is out of order that they live in continued mental torture. They would spend their lives in putting things in their proper places, but only to see them out of place again. They suffer and are sorely tempted to fret.

3. All forms of active life bring their temptations to fretfulness. Business men often meet with the selfishness and meanness of human nature. They

deal with those who will deceive for a shilling, break their promises, and neglect their payments with little consciousness of wrong-doing. Ministers, when doing their utmost to save time, will be visited by callers who come in just for a chat because they have nothing else to do. Prayer-meetings are now and then smothered by some wise brother who takes the time of a dozen others in order to expound his peculiar views, and exhibit his unconscious conceit. Men who devote their lives to the study of a favorite subject come to regard an interruption as the unpardonable sin, but interruptions they will have. Students, in the midst of their studies, will be bored by listless companions who waste their own time, and are ready to kill the time of others. Teachers will come in contact with pupils on whose dullness explanations and repetitions will be lavished in vain, and others whose sharp wits will be expended in the invention of vexatious tricks. No vocation is exempt from these provocations to fretfulness. The higher the ideals of life, the more exalted the sense of honor, and the more sensitive and refined the nature, so much the more keenly are these temptations felt.

4. Temptations to fretfulness may come from expecting too much from this world. It is the illu-

sion of the child that he sees something a little way beyond him, which, if he could but possess, his cup of blessing would be full. This *illusion* of the child becomes the *delusion* of the adult. Great expectations are cherished as to what the next acquisition will bring—that increase in wealth, that new house, that coveted position, that anything upon which the heart is set as the condition of its blessedness. If ideas of life are formed from the reading of fiction, the matter is still worse. Such ideas embody the unreal, and will not be realized in actual life. The young woman who becomes a bride in the belief that she has for a husband the hero of her most fascinating love-story, will learn to her unutterable surprise and disappointment that he is an average human being. The young man whose mental picture of womanhood has been painted by the hand of romance will suffer a similar mortification. In their mutual chagrin they give way to fretfulness, and thus make the bad still worse. Meanwhile the chief fault in the case consists in the fact that they both expected from this world what was never in it. This way of expecting blessedness from the things of this world is the way of dissatisfaction and failure. It is a heavy load to carry; it makes the spirit bitter and fretful. God never made a hu-

man soul to be satisfied with *things*. Its rest must be found in *Him*, or it will be found nowhere. And who will be likely to bear such a lifelong cheat without fretting? All searchings and strugglings for a substitute for God will and must end in failure, and so long as this struggle continues, so long failure and mortification and fretfulness will be likely to continue.

5. The temporal circumstances of many furnish the occasion for the temptation to fretfulness. They have little or nothing laid by for the future, their families are dependent upon them for bread and clothes and education. Some are in impaired health, and live in dread of the day when they will no longer be able to provide for the wants of those dependent upon them. They have come to know that age is sapping their strength, and, as they have all they can do now to earn a living, they worry as to what can be done to keep the wolf from the door when they shall be able no longer to labor. This is no fancy picture. The cases are numerous. Fretting seems to them inevitable. They think it impossible not to give way to it. They are sure that those who talk about fretting as a sin do not understand the pressure which is upon them.

Others who have been accustomed to plenty have

been reduced to a fraction of their former means, and they fret as bitterly over the loss of accustomed luxuries as their neighbors over the lack of necessities. And even those who have more than enough for themselves are often as unhappily anxious lest future losses bring them to poverty. Still others fret themselves over the mystery of the unequal distribution of providential blessings. They see many others, no better than themselves, sharing more largely this world's good, and they are "envious at the foolish when they see the prosperity of the wicked."[3]

6. Many good people fall into divers temptations to worry and fret over their religious states. They see themselves so far below their ideals; their attainments are so meager; the good they have done is so very little, and their efforts to help others have so signally failed. They think their religious life exceptionally discouraging. They have difficulties which others seem to escape. They hardly know whom or what to blame; but they worry about their spiritual state in the present and their hopes for the future.

We are not now pointing out the meaning of this state of mind, though it has a meaning. Nor

[3] Psa. lxxii, 3.

will we stop here to show that worrying and fretting never increase spirituality or help a soul out of darkness into light. We only mention this doubting, chaotic religious state as the occasion of sore temptation to fretfulness. We have referred to these different sources of temptation, not to deny their reality or to make little of them. They are very real and very trying. But we do maintain that there are good reasons why we should not yield to these temptations, and if such reasons do exist, they are the promise that we may have gracious and all-sufficient help in overcoming them.

II. SOME REASONS WHY WE SHOULD NOT YIELD TO THE SIN OF FRETFULNESS.

1. It never does any good to be fretful. No interest of our own, either of body or mind, is ever served by it. It does not render us more wise in perplexity or more brave in difficulty. It does not increase in us the spirit of prayer, much less that of thanksgiving. Nor does it ever benefit others. It never corrects the fault of a child, a scholar, or a neighbor. It never wins a friend nor subdues an enemy. It is dead loss from beginning to end.

2. On the contrary, it does much harm. It injures one's health. The state of mind which is ex-

pressed in fretfulness is not a normal state. It is a fire in the nervous system which burns up its force. It is the eating friction which wears away the machinery of life. Many who are credited in their obituaries with having died of hard work, have done their work at unseasonable hours, much of it under artificial excitement, and in the haste of impatience and fretfulness. The human constitution will stand an enormous amount of hard work if it be done seasonably and cheerfully. It is well known that milk will turn sour during a thunderstorm. A fit of anger is a cyclone in the human system. Under its influence certain fluids become acid, and even poisonous. Chronic fretfulness produces kindred results.

It is equally unhealthful to the mind. It adds another pang to those which already exist. It stands in the way of dispassionate judgment. It is hasty where deliberation is demanded. It reduces courage, and is incapable of calm and persistent effort. In the spiritual life it is "the sin which doth so easily beset us."[4] It is the enemy of Christian peace. It wounds our confidence and puts us upon our faces in shame and self-reproach before God. It grieves the Holy Spirit. It conveys to others an unfavorable

[4] Heb. xii, 1.

impression as to the genuineness of our piety, and thus hinders our usefulness. Men flee from a rancid and fretful spirit. In fifty years I have not known a cynical and fault-finding Church member to lead a soul to Christ. A fretful spirit renders unhappy all who come in contact with it. Saint and sinner alike regard it as inconsistent with the religion of Jesus Christ.

3. Fretfulness dishonors God. He reveals Himself as our Heavenly Father. He has assured us of His loving care. He wills our highest possible good. At inconceivable cost He has manifested His interest in us, and has pledged Himself in holy covenant to supply all our real needs. He has bid us take knowledge of His care of the birds, and then asks, "Are ye not much better than they?"[5] It is He who has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."[6] Did He not see you in all your trials and cares when He made these promises? Do they not mean you now? How it must grieve His infinite heart of love to see His children elbowing their way along as if all His assurances of protection meant nothing! Shall we treat Him as the heathen treat their gods, as indifferent to human interests except when bribed to take notice of them? What dishonor should we bring upon our homes if we thus complained and

[5] Matt. vi, 26. [6] Heb. xiii, 5.

fretted under the government and care of our earthly fathers! Earthly life was never designed for mere jollying; we are here to achieve character. Earthly trials are for heavenly discipline. Shall we arraign His wisdom, and defeat His loving purpose in our discipline?

4. Fretfulness is proof of existing self-will. We fret because we want something which we have no evidence that God wants us to have. We are not satisfied with His arrangements for us. We have some schemes of our own, and we complain because He does not adopt them. We think we could improve upon God's plans in our cases. No doubt we reject this statement in our theories; it strikes us as both ludicrous and profane, and so it is. But when we worry and fret about things which we can not prevent, and which come to us in the course of Divine providence, do we not say it all in our practice?

5. Jesus our Lord was never fretful. He saw all the weaknesses of His disciples, and all the wickedness of the world; He felt them all as much more deeply than we do as He was greater and holier than we are, but He did not fret. He met ingratitude in its most astounding manifestations; He was patient with unreasoning ignorance and besotted superstí-

tion; He was made the curse of hypocrisy and the jeer of the rabble, but not one fretful word escaped His lips. *And we are Christians!* Surely this is reason enough why we should not yield to temptation and live in the sin of fretfulness.

III. BUT HOW SHALL THE TEMPTATIONS TO FRETFULNESS BE OVERCOME?

1. Not by the mere force of our own wills. Good resolutions alone, though piled never so high, will not prove availing. The question of the philosophical possibilities of the human will need not here be discussed. It is enough for us to know that God neither asks nor expects us to overcome any sin in our own strength alone. He seeks to unite our activity with His, our weakness with His strength. Redemption from sin does not leave God and man separated, but united in purpose, and in energy of life. I venture to say that you have attempted this conquest of yourself by force of will alone more than once already, and you have not succeeded. But your failures have just prepared you for the true way for overcoming temptation.

2. It will be helpful to cultivate the grace of thankfulness for mercies in the past. We should not

dwell exclusively upon what God has withholden from us, but much upon what He has given to us. Call to mind the fact that God has always been better to us than our fears, and that many times that of which we have complained has been for our highest good. Gather from the past the lesson that, if we could see what God sees, and if we are right with Him, we should undoubtedly wish to have His dealings with us just what they are. "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."[7]

3. Though we shall not overcome the temptations to fretfulness by the force of our wills alone, we can not too strongly insist that our wills be fully surrendered to God's will. We must have no interest counter to or separate from the kingdom of Christ. When the will of Christ is our will, there is little in any world to worry about. Fenelon says: "From the moment you give up all self-will, and seek nothing but what He wills, you will be free from restless anxiety and forecasting; there will be nothing to conceal, nothing to bring about. Short of that you will be uneasy, changeable, easily put out, dissatisfied with yourself and others, full of reserve and mistrust."[8]

[7] 1 Thess. v, 18. [8] Letters to Men, p. 264.

4. Avoid living in a state of excitement upon any subject whatever. Cultivate the habit of calmness and "self-recollection." True zeal for God is not religious fever nor physical vehemence. We are doubly exposed to temptation when we are in an excited state of mind. We are then more easily clouded in judgment and thrown off our guard. He who lives upon religious exhilaration will walk among snares and perilous reactions.

5. But "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."[9] Christ accepted, accepted constantly, is our strength against all sin. Christ in us, Christ as our life, is our overcoming power. The victory is His, though it be won in us. Jesus did not fret when visibly among men; He will not fret in us. It is *He,* not *a blessing* which will bring to us overcoming power. It is not an *experience;* it is the Personal Christ who keeps us. "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Suffer not your faith to be diverted one hair's breadth from Him. We need Him, and we need nothing besides. What He will do and how He will do it is His business, not ours. Receive Him as He offers Himself now. To

[9] 1 John v, 4.

that weak, stumbling, self-accusing disciple, He offers Himself without price or reward. We need the whole of Christ, each one, the whole of Christ to himself. The whole of Christ each one can have. Accept Him now, and you shall find that all the wealth of God's promises are "in Him, yea, and in Him are, AMEN."[10]

[10] 1 Cor. i, 20.

V.

OUR BIBLE.

"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the Word of our God shall stand forever."—Isa. xl, 8.

THE prophet here contrasts the transitory nature of all things human with the permanence and everlasting certainty of the Divine promises. The Apostle Peter quotes this passage. He, too, dwells upon the withering and fading character of earthly glories, as set over against the Word of the Lord, which endureth forever, and he adds, "This is the Word which, by the gospel, is preached unto you."[1] What was *promise* to the prophet was *fact* to the apostle. Promise and fact are the pillars on which our Christian faith rests. They are the two Testaments of our Bible. Both promises and facts embody the Word of the Lord. They tie the Testaments together. They have given to our Bible a history of its own, and many traits peculiar to itself.

[1] 1 Pet. i, 25.

1. Our Bible is remarkable among books for its age. Here it is, and it has been here a long time. Our fathers and mothers and all their known ancestors read this book. Almost three hundred years ago, forty-seven scholarly men, nominated by the two great universities of England, spent nearly four years in making a new translation of this book for the use of English-speaking people. Their painstaking work gave to us our "Authorized Version," which we have all learned to love so dearly. There had been several other English versions before this time. Among them was that of William Tyndale, which appeared in 1534. A century and a half earlier, dear old John Wyclif translated the whole Bible from the Latin into English. Alfred the Great must have had this book, for he wrote a paraphrase of the Ten Commandments, and undertook to bring other parts of the Bible into the Anglo-Saxon language, but died before the work was done. Another century and a half backward, Venerable Bede was at work translating, and finished the Gospel of John while dying. Back further, to the very dawn of English literature, and Caedmon was there paraphrasing parts of the Bible in Anglo-Saxon.

But the Bible was in other lands and in other tongues before it reached England. Our New Testament was so extensively quoted by the writers of the first three centuries, that Lord Hailes, of Scotland, gathered out of their writings nearly the whole of its contents. The enemies of Christianity, in their earliest attacks, referred to our Gospels as accredited Christian documents. There are more than five thousand references to passages in the New Testament by one of the Church fathers who began writing before St. John had been dead a hundred years. Justin Martyr, who wrote in the first half of the second century, quotes and alludes to a hundred and eighty passages which are found in the four Gospels. These Gospels were read in the Churches in Asia Minor, Syria, Northern Africa, and all the countries bordering on the Mediterranean. They were universally received as of apostolic authority. Polycarp quotes thirty-six passages from the New Testament in his short epistle, and he had been a Christian eighty-six years in A. D. 165. So here we are, in the lifetime of some of the apostles, with men who quoted our Bible as we quote it, and believed it as we believe it. Here we have in our hands the statements of men who lived when Jesus Christ lived, men who heard what

He said and saw what He did. Here we have the record of what the apostles preached, and the truth for which they died—the Word of God which, by the Gospel, is preached unto you.

2. This long life of our Bible has been beset with storms and trials. It has withstood the changes of thousands of years, while every possible effort has been made to destroy it, and to undermine its authority. When we think of what has come and gone, lived and perished during this time, we may count its preservation as a struggle for existence, and a survival of the fittest. Nations by the score have disappeared from the maps of the world; civilizations have changed from the most simple to the most complex, and boastful institutions have withered as the grass. They have perished, but this book remains. It has been assaulted by all forms of infidelity, from that of the scoffer to that of the scholar. Its extinction has often been determined and as often predicted; but it has lived on. Decrees of emperors and bulls of popes have doomed it to destruction; it has been made fuel for public bonfires by angry zealots and bigoted ecclesiastics; men have been forbidden to read it upon pain of damnation; but from threats, and prophecies, and fire, it has come forth unhurt. Tyn-

dale was compelled to leave his country in order to complete his English translation, and such was the state of things in Europe at that time that he was not safe even in Holland. Hunted, betrayed, imprisoned, and strangled, the dead body of this godly man was burned in order to heap every possible indignity upon one who had dared to give the Bible to the people in their own tongue. Like John at Patmos, he suffered "for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ."[2] He had done what he could to answer the prayer which he offered with his dying breath, "Lord, open the king of England's eyes."[3] It was not enough that the brave and faithful Wyclif had been dead and buried more than forty years; he had translated the Bible from an unknown tongue into the language of the English people, and his bones were taken from the grave and burned, the ashes being thrown upon the waters of the "Swift." The ashes were swifter than the stream; for they went "from the Severn to the sea,"[4] the heralds of the Bible in a hundred tongues. The fires of persecution have been terrific, and the rack of criticism has been unsparing; but our Bible has lived through and triumphed over all.

[2] Rev. i, 9. [3] Int. Eng. Hexapla, p. 63. [4] Wordsworth.

3. Our Bible is peculiar among books for the living energy which has accompanied it. For some reason, people love this book as they love no other. Those who study it never tire of it. Other books are read once or twice and laid aside; this one is read daily for a lifetime, and increases in its power to interest and enrich the reader. This Word of the Lord is "the sword of the Spirit"[5] in personal reformation and salvation. In it every man sees himself. It strikes home. It is ancient, but it is young. No other book so accuses and condemns you; no other so relieves and exalts you. It hunts out every man's secret sins, but leads him to One "who takes away the sin of the world."[6] Tried souls find in it guidance in perplexity and consolation in suffering. The devout prisoner who, in his dark cell, was allowed a light only for eating his meals, chose to use the light for reading his Bible, though he ate his food in the dark. Its promises have been on the lips of burning martyrs from the earliest days. It is found on the breasts of dying soldiers and at the pillows of departing saints.

Our Bible has proved a saving health to the nations. The greatest queen of modern history could say to a visiting prince, as she passed a copy

[5] Eph. vi, 17. [6] John i, 29.

of the Scriptures to his hand, "This is the secret of England's greatness." Scotland and Ireland are side by side in the same seas, both peoples were originally of the same Celtic stock. The one accepted the Bible and built the character of her people upon it; the other rejected it, and imbibed its faith as it filtered through mediæval Latin. Their histories reflect their different relations to the Word of God. Our Bible is the book which the Puritans brought to the shores of New England, and on its principles they laid the foundations of "a Church without a bishop, a State without a king."[7] Andrew Jackson may not have been a saint in character or in speech, but he spoke with the clear vision of a statesman when he said, "That book is the rock upon which our republic rests."[8] "No great man has wrought among his fellows, no nation has made history, except under the influence and inspiration of these books we call the Bible."[9]

Not alone those who read the Bible for its aid in their devotions; the lists of those who feel and acknowledge its unique excellencies include those of all classes and callings, the per cent of scholars and public benefactors being notably large. Patriots like Patrick Henry, Washington, and Lin-

[7] Rufus Choate. [8] What Noted Men Think of the Bible, p. 38.
[9] W. R. Harper in Bib. World, xxii, p. 324.

coln have borne witness to their faith in its Divine teachings. Men of letters resort to this book as soldiers turn to their magazine for ammunition. Masters in art and song have gathered from it the themes for their most exquisite pieces. Students of Shakespeare have found that in more than five hundred instances that immortal bard has quoted or woven into his allusions passages from the Bible. The editor of the New York *Sun* pronounces the study of the Bible an indispensable part of the education of a journalist. In addressing a society of journalists, he said: "There is, perhaps, no book whose style is more suggestive and more instructive, from which you may learn more directly that sublime simplicity which never exaggerates, which recounts the greatest events with solemnity, but without sentimentality or affectation; none which you can open with such confidence and lay down with such reverence." And I will add the view of Sir William Jones, whose name is so prominent in the history of English literature. He says of our Bible: "It contains more true sublimity, more exquisite beauty, more pure morality, more important history, and finer strains of poetry and eloquence than can be collected from all other books in whatever age or language they may have been written."

4. It has often been noted that, though our Bible is a collection of books, it is in the truest sense *one book*. Viewed as we view other books, we might naturally anticipate that it would be a volume of fragments, without unity of subject or plan. Between the earliest and latest portions sixteen hundred years intervene. The writers lived in different countries; they were surrounded by diverse customs; and were under differing systems of government; few of them ever saw each other. A work of sixty-six parts, written by some fifty different persons, separated widely from each other in time and place, including the varieties in mental constitution and training usual in such a number, we might easily expect would present a medley of themes and views. These fifty writers are, some of them, in early manhood, and others in old age; they differ in vocation and social rank from the plowman to the king. Some were uneducated; others possessed the learning of their time. The book contains nearly all forms of literature. Here are prophecy and history, prose and poetry. Its poetry is sometimes didactic, sometimes lyric, and is not without its touches of the dramatic. It speaks in allegory, and is matchless in its parables. It deals with every-day life, and discusses the most pro-

found subjects which have ever occupied the thoughts of men. It introduces speakers the most diverse in thought and character, speakers who talk from heaven and earth and hell. There are chapters which breathe in the most charming simplicity, and others which mount up in the loftiest flights of Oriental imagery.

And yet, underneath all this variety, and above all these conflicting conditions, there is a oneness in this book which is hard to find in other productions. It has an historic track which it follows with undeviating fidelity. We may call it the history of a chosen people, the history of other peoples being given only as they are related to the fortunes of the Hebrews. In a broader sense it is the history of the development of the kingdom of God in the earth. Higher yet, it is the history of the self-revelation of God to men. The Old Testament anticipates the New. It closes with the long, loud blast of the prophetic trumpet, sounding across four hundred years of silence, and proclaiming, "Behold, I send My Messenger, and He shall prepare the way before Me."[10] The New Testament presupposes the Old; for who could understand the Gospel by Matthew or the Epistle to the He-

[10] Mal. iii, 1.

brews, if Moses and the prophets had not written? Prophecy and fulfillment, type and antitype bind our Testaments together in one. Like the cherubim in the holy of holies, they touch their wings to each other, while they are overshadowed by the glory of the Divine Presence. The doctrine of our Bible is essentially one. Everywhere man is a sinner; Christ is a Savior. Its theme is God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. It begins with Christ in creation, and ends with His everlasting coronation. It has been well said that the several books of "Paradise Lost" give less evidence of having been the product of a single mind, than do the sixty-six books of the Bible. As in nature, mountains and seas, suns and sand-grains are held in one system by the pervading presence of the only God, so our Bible in all its parts constitutes the "sundry times and divers manners in which God spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, and hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son."[11]

5. Along with this essential unity, our Bible presents a process of continued development. It has been a growth. The book itself was once small. It contained at most but a sixth part of what it now

[11] Heb. i, 1.

includes. Its contents are equally marked by movement. True to God's method in nature, its teachings rise from the lower to the higher. In them we have the record of the progressive revelation of God. This revelation is contained in centuries of history; it grew as the world grew. In the childhood of the race God spake as unto children in symbols and prohibitions. This was the "law which came by Moses." It dwelt prominently upon sin. It was to bring the world under conviction, and thus prepare the way for the "grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ."[12] The earlier conceptions of God given in the Old Testament, though far above the degrading views of the heathen nations, fall below the revelation in Him "who is the brightness of His glory and the express image of His Person."[13] What patriarch ever began his prayer with "Our Father who art in heaven?" In the Biblical idea of sacrifice we begin with slaughtered animals; we rise to "the sacrifices of God, which are a broken spirit,"[14] and we reach a climax in Him who "humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."[15]

In the Old Testament views of death, we seem to stand in the atmosphere of uncertainty and dread.

[12] John i, 17. [13] Heb. i, 3. [14] Psa. li, 17a. [15] Phil. ii, 8.

Good men prayed to live long on the earth. They regarded long life as a special token of Divine regard. In the New Testament no man offers prayer for an extension of his earthly life. Believers are "confident and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord."[16] Views of the future life under the old dispensation corresponded with the ideas of death. Indeed, proofs of the fact of future life in the Old Testament are few and hard to make plain and positive. We seem to look through a haze of mystery into a land of silence. The rewards of piety appear to cluster around the gifts of providence in this world. In the clearer light of New Testament teaching we catch a brighter view. Here the worlds are near each other, and Christ the Lord brings them into fellowship. No intimation is given that religion and worldly prosperity are necessarily united; but Christians consent to become pilgrims and strangers, "knowing in themselves that in heaven they have a better and an enduring substance."[17] In the first books religion is closely bound to ritualistic observances; in the latest, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."[18]

Our Bible is a development, not only in doc-

[16] 2 Cor. v, 8. (R. V.) [17] Heb. x, 34; xi, 13. [18] John iv, 24.

trinal concepts, but in ethical standards as well. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were good men—the best of their time; but judged by New Testament standards, they would have been nearer the penitentiary than the Christian's heaven. Jephthah maintained a standing with God in the dark days of the Judges, though violating the principles of Christian morality in shocking cruelty. Even David, inspired though he was, could hardly have caught sight of the lofty standard of life given in the Sermon on the Mount, or have conceived of a kingdom of God which is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."[19]

These lines of development in our Bible are so many illustrations of the fact that methods of God in nature and methods of God in revelation coincide. They were conceived in the same mind and wrought out by the same hand. The secret within this progressive movement is the fact that both nature and the Bible are the records of the self-revelation of God. Our Bible is the history of the unfolding of the Divine purpose and Person. From the cherubim at the gate of Eden to the New Jerusalem, which comes down from God out of heaven, it is the story of the manifestations of God in the

[19] Rom. xiv, 17.

Eternal Son. Through the long centuries of this history, Christ is ever present, and Christ is still coming. *He is forever the coming One.*

6. Our Bible is a Divine-human book. Like the ladder in Jacob's dream, its top is in heaven, and its foot rests upon the earth. It came from God, and it came through men,—men used, not as dead machinery, but as responsible personalities in the normal exercise of their faculties. "Men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit."[20] But in moving them to speak, the Holy Spirit did not destroy their essential character as men. *They were still men and under human limitations.* Inspiration did not turn them into mere talking and writing machines; it uplifted them to catch the thought of God, and moved them to speak what they thought. In this speaking, their mental peculiarities, their surroundings, and their degrees of spiritual elevation, all entered as shaping factors into their utterances. This human element in our Bible, so far from detracting from its inspiration, exalts it to a higher plane. It is not a Divine clairvoyance in which the natural operation of the faculties is suspended; it is not the mechanical control of the tongue or the hand; it is the inbreathing of the

[20] 2 Pet. i, 21. (R. V.)

Spirit of God by which the sacred writers were more Divine, and all the more normally human.

It has been insisted by many that, in order to defend the authority of the Scriptures, it must be maintained that inspiration extends to every line and word. If such inspiration be possible, it could not, of course, apply to our English Bible, for all versions are translations by men who claim no inspiration beyond what every good man may have in his religious work. And, had we in our hands the very manuscripts which were written by evangelists and apostles, such a mechanical type of inspiration would be neither necessary nor desirable. It is doubtful, even, if it could be justly called inspiration. Bishop Atticus Haygood, than whom no abler defender of Holy Scripture has recently written, says: "Had it been necessary, in order to give man saving truth, God would, we can not doubt, have used holy men as mere pen-points. In that case, however, holy men would not have been necessary; one man would have done as well as another, provided only that he wrote a good hand."[21] According to this view of inspiration, the writers of the Bible were mechanical instruments, their own thoughts and experiences and characters

[21] Jack-knife and Brambles, p. 168.

having no real influence upon what they wrote. This view of their relation to their Divine messages is evidently not claimed by the writers themselves. Its advocacy in the Church does not date back of the seventeenth century. Our Protestant fathers were confronted by the claims of infallible councils and an infallible pope. They thought it necessary to set up the standard of verbal inspiration in order to sanction their appeal to the infallible book. It came into the Church as a supposed polemical necessity. The theory provides for no possible degrees of inspiration. It awards the same degree of Divine help to a writer in copying a genealogical table from Jewish records, or in relating a fact coming under his own observation, that it claims for the writers of the prophecies of Isaiah and the Epistles of Paul. It fails to account for the fact, so patent to all readers of the Bible, that each writer has a style and vocabulary peculiar to himself, a style touched by an individual cast of mind, by the customs of the time and place in which he lived, and even by the vocation which he followed. This theory can give no explanation of the freedom with which the writers of the New Testament handle the Scriptures of the Old. In the numerous quotations which they make, little

attention is generally paid to verbal accuracy, the stress being placed upon the meaning and its application. If all their words were selected for them by the Holy Spirit, no reason can be given why the same facts, when recorded by different writers, should not have been written in the same language. Even the writing of Pilate over the head of the crucified Savior, recorded by all the evangelists, and in all cases meaning precisely the same, is not alike in words in any two of the Gospels. The different evangelists place the same event in different relations, varying as to what immediately preceded it and what followed it. This does not indicate verbal dictation, but that freedom of mental operation through which each writer recorded that which had impressed him most deeply, and which he recalled most vividly.

In mistaken zeal, some have gone so far as to claim that the vowel-points in the Hebrew Bible were placed by direct inspiration, though it is well known that the system of vowel-points and accents was not invented till the fourth century of the Christian era.[22]

It has been said that, if one error of any kind could be found in the Bible, its claim to inspiration

[22] Hist. of the Bible, Kitto, p. 40.

and divine authority would be overthrown. This must mean that, if the apostles were inspired, they were thereby incapable of error in any mental process. They could not make a mistake in solving a mathematical problem, in quoting a Greek poet, or in citing the words of an Old Testament prophet. These desperate conclusions are the logical outcome of a theory which is equally desperate. God does not turn *men* into *things* by revealing to them His truth concerning the plan of salvation. Nor does He, in giving His truth to the world, descend to the plane of heathen oracles and spirit mediums. Inspired men studied; they "searched diligently" for the purpose of ascertaining what "the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify."[23] The Prophet Daniel, though most blessed of all with visions and revelations, "understood by books" the meaning of other prophetic utterances.[24] God used Daniel's mind, and Daniel used his own mind. God and the prophet did not work separately and in turn; they worked in unison, and the point of inspiration was the point of their meeting.

This theory of mechanical inspiration needlessly exposes our Bible to criticism, and gives to its enemies their most favorable grounds for attack. The

[23] 1 Pet. i, 11. [24] Dan. ix, 2.

jibes and scoffs of Thomas Paine, and the sarcasm of Robert Ingersoll derive their force chiefly from the notion that inspiration is direct, verbal dictation. They light upon variations in different accounts of the same event; they find quotations inaccurately made; they see that the science of the Biblical writers was the science of their times, and they assume that anything in phraseology or mental concept on the part of these writers which can not be squared with the latest canons of criticism, proves their claim to inspiration false, or charges a blunder upon the Almighty. This reasoning is fallacious; the conclusion is wholly gratuitous; it is not contained in the premise. It overlooks the fact that an inspired man is one who is under Divine illumination, but who is still a man. He is not omniscient, nor does he possess any other of the natural attributes of God. Bishop R. S. Foster has stated the case admirably when he says: "While there is abundant evidence that the Bible is characteristically a divinely-inspired book, it would be the height of absurdity to suppose it inspired in every word. Nor does this affect the truth of any word; the uninspired parts may be as true as the inspired parts."[25] We ought certainly to be thank-

[25] Studies in Theology (Prol.), p. 260.

ful that we have a Divine-human Savior, and we may well give thanks also that we have a Divine-human Bible. Wherever this human element may appear, it in no way detracts from the ever-increasing evidence that our Bible is the Word of God.

REMARKS.

1. Our Bible is *the Book.* Many books are needed in the minister's study,—more than are generally found there; but *the Book* for the study is the Bible. It is the Book for the pulpit; it is the Book for the pews. It is lamentable that so few religious books are read in the homes of even Christian people; but no other book or books should be allowed to crowd out the daily reading of this one book at every fireside in the land. It is the book for the prayer-meeting and the Epworth League service. And if our class-meetings—now suffering a Babylonian captivity for the idolatry of religious feelings—are ever restored and rejuvenated, it will be by banishing the sentimental platitudes,—how I feel, what I have attained, what more I desire for myself—and bringing in what the Word of God says, intelligently explained, and lovingly and faithfully applied.

2. This subject suggests the true attitude of the ministry and Church towards what is known as "the higher criticism." In the thought of many the phrase is a name for hostility to religion, and subtle methods for overthrowing the faith once delivered to the saints. This is far from the truth, and the wholesale manner in which these Biblical students are often denounced, without discrimination or knowledge of their work, is a wrong to them, besides creating the impression that Christians fear to submit their sacred books to the scrutiny of modern investigators and methods. There is little doubt that the pious horror which good people have manifested lest the Bible should be demolished at the hands of eminent scholars has helped to increase the doubt which they have so deeply regretted.

It is true that some of this class of critics have proved unfriendly to religion. They have attacked the very foundations of our faith. They have denied the supernatural, and have treated our Bible as a fragmentary compilation of Old World literature. We have no desire to apologize for their views. They are the extremists, such as attend every new movement of thought. But many who are included among higher critics are able and devout men, as well as scholars of eminence in their

chosen lines. The Christian faith is dear to them, and they have reached their conclusions in painstaking and prayer. In such an epoch of intellectual quickening as is now upon us, it could not be expected that the Bible and its claims would escape the methods of criticism which are being applied to everything else. Nor would such an exemption of our Bible from the tests of modern scientific methods be desirable, even if it were possible. The Christian believer should never fear the results of honest investigation concerning the Bible or Christianity; he thus reveals the weakness of his faith. Some things may be shaken, but only that the things which can not be shaken may remain.

Higher criticism is no new or strange thing. It has arisen at every period of marked intellectual advancement. Whether or not there were two separate documents compiled by Moses into the Pentateuch, was discussed by a learned Doctor of the Church in the sixteenth century. Martin Luther and John Calvin handled the books of the New Testament with a freedom which would startle the Christian critics of our time. Every commentator works in higher criticism. He seeks to find out the authorship and date of certain books in the Bible, and this is the work of the higher critic. Every

student of the Bible is a higher critic. If he seeks a reason why the apocryphal books are excluded from the canon; if he endeavors to find out who wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews; if he asks how the account of Moses' death stands in Deuteronomy; if he tries to place the Psalms in their historical settings; if he wishes to get more information concerning the Book of the Law which was found in the temple in the days of Josiah; if he works at these questions, or any one of a thousand others, he is in higher criticism despite himself.

And what is the harm in raising these questions? And what has the result to do with the Bible as a revelation of God? What matters it whether Paul or Apollos or Barnabas wrote to the Hebrews? Since the Bible does not tell us who did write it, and all three were "good men and full of the Holy Ghost," it is all right any way. What has the religion of Christ lost if the book of Isaiah was written by two prophets instead of one? The second part is more full of evangelical truth than the first, so why not thank God for the holy man whom our critics call "The Great Unknown?" What if Paul could not remember how many he had baptized at Corinth? There are many ministers now

who would give greater evidence of inspiration if they would cease counting converts, and go on preaching the gospel as Paul did. What if Paul, in quoting from the Old Testament, did once write "three and twenty thousand,"[26] for "four and twenty thousand?"[27] Would it have disproved his inspiration if he had blundered in repeating the multiplication table? And what if Moses gathered some existing documents into his part of the Old Testament? Would not any man of common sense have done the same if they were what he wanted?

Let us welcome all searchers after truth as our fellow-workers. On every man who finds out a truth which we have not before found, let the Church of God pronounce a blessing. That, too, without one fear that our Bible or our Christianity will suffer as the result, knowing that whatever withers and fades, *the Word of our God will stand forever*. To those who would use the Biblical researches of our time to weaken if possible our faith, and do our Bible dishonor, with loving pity we will say:

"Hammer away ye hostile bands;
Your hammers break; God's anvil stands."

[26] 1 Cor. x, 8. [27] Num. xxv, 9.

VI.

ARE WE ALL GOING TO HEAVEN?

"Then said one unto Him, Lord, are there few that be saved?"—Luke xiii, 23.

We are not told who this "one" was who asked this question; we do not know upon what occasion it was asked; the motive of the inquirer is not definitely stated. Not unlikely he meant by the word "saved" what many people now mean by the same word—a holy and happy place to which good people go when they die.

The teachings of Jesus had disturbed this man. His ideas of the kingdom of God, and of the conditions of entering it were new to him. They seemed to sweep away the prospects of getting to heaven, at least to all but a few. He feared for himself. He wanted to know if this was really Jesus' view of the case. Possibly an element of curiosity entered into his question. He seemed to think that our Lord could tell how many would reach heaven, as life insurance companies calculate death rates.

The answer of Jesus was not of a nature to relieve him. "Strive to enter in,"—look to yourself, and let alone your speculations as to how many will get to heaven. *Strive*—put your whole soul into the work of your present salvation. Easy-going, half-hearted efforts will fail. Make haste to attend to this at once. Doors may be shut; crises in life may be noiselessly passed, and may serve to settle the whole question of salvation.

It would appear to be the notion of many that the Bible is largely a treatise on heaven and hell. Careful reading will, we think, convince us that, in the sense in which these terms are popularly used, there is very little in the book about either. The Bible emphasizes present relations to God and present spiritual states. The tendency to read into it a great deal in reference to the future life is very manifest. Not unfrequently passages of Scripture which are plainly descriptive of present conditions and states, are quoted as giving the secrets and glories of the future world.

The phrases, "kingdom of heaven," and "kingdom of God," which we find so frequently in the New Testament, are by many conceived to mean something which is indefinitely removed from us in time, and correspondingly distant in space. They

would make it outward in form, Jesus Christ, a visible Monarch with Jerusalem as His capital—a view cognate to that of the Jews in the days of Caiaphas. This, of course, carries with it the conclusion that the kingdom of heaven is not yet set up, in fact, not yet in existence. Others, with as little Scripture authority, would make the phrase mean the abode of the righteous dead, somewhere among or beyond the stars. Now, the kingdom of heaven has been long in existence; it is here in this world. Souls come into it by a new birth—by being "born from above."[1] In numbers, it is yet a minority, and so we pray "Thy kingdom come," meaning "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."[2] We pray to "our Father," who, though in heaven, is nearer to us than any other can be. "The kingdom of God is within you."[3] It is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."[4] Believers are already in the kingdom of heaven, and need go no more out forever.

The terms "save," "saved," and "salvation" are used in the New Testament to denote, not the condition of the finally glorified, but the spiritual condition of regenerated souls here. It is that which we may neglect;[5] it is received by faith here;[6] it is

[1] John iii, 3. [2] Matt. vi, 10. [3] Luke xvii, 21.
[4] Rom. xiv, 17. [5] Heb. ii, 3. [6] 1 Pet. i, 9.

L. of C.

a present experience;[7] and now is the day of salvation.[8]

The "heavenly places,"[9] which are mentioned several times in the Epistles of Paul, and which are often alluded to with index finger pointing upwards, as if to locate them among the celestial spheres, are the Christian privileges and experiences which Jews and Gentiles equally enjoy under the gospel. Christians of all classes were sitting together in these heavenly places when Paul was writing. The phrase is the translation of a noun in the plural number.[10] The *heavenly places* are only the "heavenlies," in which believers live in this world. And the "Mount Zion" and the "City of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem," with the "innumerable company of angels,"[11] are the gospel privileges and realities to which Christian believers *"are come."* They are the Mount of Beatitudes as opposed to the mount which "might be touched," and which was "blackness and darkness and tempest."[12]

How often, when the mysterious glories of the heavenly world are set forth as surpassing human thought, do we hear quoted in support of this truth,

[7] Eph. ii, 8. [8] 2 Cor. vi, 2.
[9] Eph. i, 3, 20; ii, 16; iii, 10; vi, 12.
[10] Mile-Stone Papers, p. 229. [11] Heb. xii, 22. [12] *Ibid.*, vii, 8.

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."[13] There is no doubt of our inability in our present state fully to know the realities of the heavenly world, but this truth is not taught in this text. There is not an allusion to anything other than the realities which are made known to the Christian in his spiritual life. Whatever these things are which so transcend human investigation, it is expressly stated in the next words, that "God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit." The truth taught in this passage is one of surpassing moment. It is that the unregenerate man forms no proper conception of spiritual realities. He knows nothing of acceptance with God or of communion with Him. He has no consciousness of Him or of His presence. These are "the things of the Spirit," and "he can not know them because they are spiritually discerned."[14] All these realities, unknowable to "the natural man," are in the experience of Christians in this world.

The Book of Revelation is regarded by many as specially full in the information which it gives concerning heaven. On the contrary, it contains exceedingly little concerning this subject. In its

[13] 1 Cor. ii, 9. [14] *Ibid.*, ii, 14.

sublime imagery, many of the scenes which are made to pass before us are laid around the throne of God. It is from heaven that the forces emanate which guide the vast panorama of events there described. The events themselves are in the life of the Church and the world, though they are seen at the seat of power. Those who find in this book that the heaven of the saints is a literal city, fifteen hundred miles long, fifteen hundred miles wide, with walls of equal height, miss the one great truth in the picture, viz., that the cube is a symbol of perfection, and that the time will come when the Church of God will be thus perfect. The holy of holies in the temple was a cube; it was the dwelling-place of God—His dwelling-place among His people on the earth. The spiritual Church is His temple now. The new Jerusalem is not built up from the earth; it "comes down from God out of heaven."[15] It is here on the earth, and if any will insist that it is a city of the dimensions stated, they will allow us to be thankful that "the gates shall not be shut,"[16] for who, with the instincts of humanity, could endure such an incarceration? We are moving too slowly, to be sure, towards "a new heaven and a new earth," according to the Revela-

[15] Rev. xxi, 10. [16] *Ibid.*, xxi. 25.

tion.[17] Every evil that falls, every soul that is renewed, brings us a little nearer the new earth, "wherein dwelleth righteousness." When the triumphs of the cross shall be complete,

> "And not one rebel heart remains
> But over all the Savior reigns,"

then will the new Jerusalem have come down from God out of heaven; the new heavens and new earth will be realized; then shall it be said, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people."[18]

With many the life of heaven seems to be regarded as the antithesis of whatever has been disagreeable or trying in this world, or as the enlarging and intensifying of the joys of earth which are now most appreciated. This way of forming our notions of future life is more natural than trustworthy. The heaven of our Sioux Indians is the happy hunting-grounds, where game is abundant, and where the disturbing feet of white men never come. The paradise of the Koran is a prolonged carnival of sensuality, well suited to the instincts of the average Mussulman. Not a few of the hymns which are sung in devotional meetings overflow with sentiments about heaven, and at the same time

[17] Rev. xxi, 1. [18] *Ibid.*, xxi, 3.

teach a carnal theology. Rothe regarded his daily correspondence as drudgery. This led him to say that, to him, one of the charms of the heavenly life was the fact that there would be no letter-writing there.[19] He gave a much better idea of the "saints' rest," when he said, "We shall be surrounded by realities, and, best of all, we shall be real ourselves."[20]

The poverty of language adds embarrassment to our concepts of heaven. When the missionaries first visited the Sandwich Islands, they found no word in the language of the natives which would express the idea of everlasting happiness. The nearest equivalent which they could find was a word which indicated the intense satisfaction derived from eating putrid meat. To what a disadvantage did this place the teachers of the kingdom of God! Even Paul could not tell what he perceived when he was so lifted up that he became unconscious of bodily habiliment. The passage does not mean that he was forbidden to report what he saw; he was simply unable to do it. There was no analogue in human speech which would enable him to convey his thought. We are compelled to think through material analogies. It is easier to fasten

[19] Still Hour, p. 48. [20] Ibid., p. 49.

to the symbol than to the thing signified. We may readily substitute the form for the substance. We come to think the form *is* the substance, and contend for it as the all-essential. It thus often becomes true of us,

> "Notions, like coins, we prize as they grow old;
> It is the rust we value; not the gold."

Heaven is a natural, not an artificial, adjustment. Fitness is the principle upon which it will be bestowed. Jesus told James and John that, in His kingdom, no honors were conferred arbitrarily or from favoritism. If they would drink of His cup and stand with Him in His baptism, they need have no trouble about their future. Christ makes His people "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."[21] "To St. John heaven is not an abode of bliss in a scene of which we can form no clear conception, but the spiritual atmosphere in which, alike on this side the grave and on the other, the saints live and move. The dwellers upon earth are not those who simply tread its firm soil and breathe its atmosphere, but those who are worldly in their spirit and whose views are bounded by the things of time."[22] The more quickly we dismiss from our thought the notion that scenery and sur-

[21] Col. i, 12. [22] Expositor's Bible on Rev., p. 355.

roundings constitute the essentials of heaven the better. God could not create circumstances in which a soul alienated from Him could realize blessedness. Heaven is not essentially in *place* or *time*. It can not be in golden streets nor gates of pearl, nor angel-choirs; it is the eternal law of antecedent and consequent worked out in character and destiny. No walls keep in or keep out, save barriers in character and relations to Jesus Christ. The life that now is and that which is to come are not separated by either a logical or a theological chasm. Christ in us is both the hope and the essence of glory. In present salvation Christ is not educating us for an eternity of sight-seeing, but for oneness with God and fellowship with all the holy. "Heaven is holiness raised to a higher power."

It seemed necessary to say this much concerning ideas of heaven before attempting to answer the question, Are we all going to heaven? We may now say that there are *some* facts which, in themselves, look as though we should all find our way to heaven.

1. *We can all be in heaven.* The conditions of admission are simple, such as all can comply with. Your past sins need not necessarily bar you out. The offer of forgiveness is universal and free. The

atonement in Christ is sufficient for any and for all. God accepts it as satisfactory to Him; we may all accept it as sufficient and be at peace with Him. Our habits of sin, however strong, may all be broken—broken forever. There is One who is mightier than our bondage; He can deliver us. We are not compelled to sin. Reader, if you forget all else in this sermon, do not forget this: *you need not sin;* Christ can save you from sinning. Your circumstances may be trying, but they do not compel you to be immoral or impenitent. You *can* enter the kingdom of heaven; you *can* enter now; you can remain there forever. This fact in itself would incline us to believe that we are all going to heaven.

2. *God wants us all in heaven.* He made us to live with Him in heaven. No will or decree of His will ever keep any of us away from heaven. He is constantly working to bring us into that state. He calls us; He pleads with us to come to Him. When we go away from Him He follows us as a mother seeks a wandering child. We grieve Him by our impenitence. Hell is no more of His willing than is the delirium of the dying drunkard. He seeks companionship with man. We wrong Him when we refuse to enter the kingdom of heaven. True, He does not want us in heaven in

a sinful, unrepentant state. That would be an impossibility. Impenitence and heaven, both as terms and as states, are mutually exclusive. There is, there can be no heaven for impenitent souls. God seeks to bring us into states in which heaven is possible to us. He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He longs for the salvation of us all, and His desire that we all enter heaven would encourage us to think that we shall all go to heaven.

3. *We are all needed in heaven.* There will be none too many in the life and service of heaven if we are all there. There is an appropriate work for each of us there—a work chosen of God for us. We shall be the means of blessing to many if we are there. A multitude of good beings want us to come there. We are known and remembered and talked about in heaven. We wrong the society of heaven if we neglect to go there. There is joy in heaven when a sinner repents and enters the kingdom of heaven. We are all needed in the militant side of this kingdom. Here is a work assigned you which no other can do. If you are a husband, know that no other person on the earth can help your wife save her soul as you can, if you are in the kingdom yourself. Children need Christian parents more than they need Sunday-schools

or Bibles. Neighbors wrong one another when they are not Christians. All this would look as though we were going to heaven without exception.

4. *We are under the strongest possible inducements to go to heaven.* To fail of this is to be untrue to ourselves. It is failure in everything. Life can hardly be said to be worth living if it begins, proceeds, and ends in alienation from God. Stupendous folly and excuseless sin mark the life of every soul who does not enter heaven. Our duty to God appeals to us. If we fail to go to heaven, we waste His mercies and turn His gifts against Himself. Our sense of justice to our fellow-men demands that we go to heaven. All that unselfish love can speak, and all that justice and righteousness mean, call upon us to make sure of the kingdom of heaven. Such inducements placed before reasonable beings would lead us to expect that they would all go to heaven.

5. But while these facts would seem to justify the expectation that we are all going to heaven, there are some others which cast a very dark shadow over this hope. The kingdom of heaven, in its militant state, is here on earth, and *many have never entered it.* The kingdom on earth and in the heavens is essentially the same. In both its lower and

upper sides it has the same King and the same laws. The kingdom as it exists on the earth is the entrance to the higher phase in heaven. The conditions of entering in both are the same; the door of the spiritual kingdom on earth is just as narrow and just as wide as the gate of heaven. That which debars from one excludes from the other. The Divine order in entering can not be reversed by any of us; the militant must be entered before the triumphant can be reached. The entrance is on earth. If you are now outside the spiritual kingdom on earth, there is a reason for it, and the same reason would keep you from the kingdom in the heavens. Whatever keeps you from Christ here, would keep you from Him there, for He is the same in all worlds. Our relation to Him now is as much a reality as it can ever be. Your acceptance with God here is recognized and indorsed in heaven. If you live in the militant kingdom a little longer, you will graduate into the higher life of the kingdom triumphant. Jesus besought the people to seek the kingdom of God before bread or clothing; but many do not do it. They are outside the entrance.

6. *The law of adaptation* is likely to obtain

throughout the spiritual worlds. If heaven is not "the survival of the fittest," it is the arrival of the fitted. It can not be doubted that many are unfitted for the heavenly state. Heaven is holy society, and there are those who do not love that which is holy; least of all do they seek the companionship of holy people. They dread rather than delight in the presence of God. They do not enjoy, nor so much as enter, His service. The writer to the Hebrews represents heaven as a "Sabbath-keeping." Many do not keep the earthly Sabbath in a heavenly way. If the short Sabbath here is to them drudgery and the occasion of folly and dissipation, what would they do with an unending Sabbath observance? In heaven the name of God is hallowed; but many here toss His name from their lips in the most trivial and irreverent manner. All heaven worships Christ, but we see many who make little or nothing of Him; they reject His invitations, and mock at His atoning sacrifice. Can such a violation of the law of adaptation ever exist under the government of God, as would be required in order to introduce an unsaved, ungodly soul into the society of saints and holy angels? Indeed, it is the false notion which wicked men entertain concern-

ing heaven which leads them to expect or so much as desire to be there. This looks as though many were not going to heaven.

7. Jesus said to this inquirer, "Strive to enter in." He warned him to get himself ready. He wanted him to be in earnest about his preparation. That was our Lord's idea of going to heaven,—the preparation for heaven, and as the preparation is the going, they are not going. They appear to be getting ready for something entirely different from heaven. They do not pray; they are not on speaking terms with God. They do not claim to have an acquaintance with Jesus Christ. Heaven could be no home to them. Instead of striving to be like the people in heaven, they go on in sin, and become more and more like those in hell. Some who claim to be getting ready for heaven, appear to be little in earnest about it; they seem more in earnest about other things. They make their religion compatible with almost anything which they desire to do. At most, this is only "seeking to enter in." This is not getting ready; they "shall not be able." Think for a moment what a heaven some would require in order to meet the demands of their present state, and then say if we are all going to heaven.

Remarks.

1. Men are often deceived in this world by thinking that happiness is the result of external conditions. They carry this misleading notion into their ideas of heaven. They think of it chiefly as a *place*. Their care is not so much about becoming heavenly in life and spirit, as about getting to a certain place. They fail to see that what would be paradise to one might be perdition to another. We can trust the Heavenly Father to adjust external conditions to His glorified children; but heaven is *first of all a spiritual state*.

2. The expectation of going to heaven is almost universal among those who have any settled views of the future state. We have known many wicked men, but very few who did not expect in some way to get into heaven after death. This expectation, when joined with heavenly character, is well founded, and precious in its influence and consolation. When based upon nothing more than the selfish desire to have the best of everything, it will prove delusive. When Miss Frances Willard breathed out her life in the words, "It will be so beautiful to be with God," we can easily see whither she was going. There was but one place in the universe for her; that place was with God. A

wicked man once strolled into a religious meeting, and after sitting uneasily for some time, arose, saying, "I want to get out of here; let me out of here; God Almighty is too near." It was just as easy to see where he *was not* going. "Tell them," said Bishop Hamline, "I had heaven before I died."[23] God gathers into His kingdom here all whom He can persuade to meet the necessary conditions, and brings to the fellowships of heaven all whose lives are hid with Christ in God.

"The Church triumphant in thy love,
Their mighty joys we know;
They sing the Lamb in hymns above,
And we in hymns below."[24]

[23] Biog. Bp. Hamline, p. 330. [24] Meth. Hymnal, No. 765.

VII.

GOD'S ESTIMATE OF MAN.

"For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."—Heb. ii, 10.

THIS text says that such is the magnitude of the interests involved in human salvation, that it was fitting for God to sacrifice all that He sacrificed, and that Christ should suffer all that He suffered in order to save man. This appalling statement indicates the estimate which God places upon His creature, man. He for whom are all things, and by whom are all things; He who made man, and who knows more about him than all other beings in the universe, regards the sacrifice of His Son, and the unspeakable sufferings He endured, as *becoming in Him*, considering what man is, and what he may through Christ become.

This view of man as a being of transcendent

worth appears frequently in Scripture statement. He was "made a little lower than God;" he was the crown and glory of creation; he was made ruler of all orders of being below himself—the representative of God in his reign in the earth; God is "mindful of him;" He "visits him;"[1] God "sets His heart upon him."[2] Redeemed men are the brethren of Jesus Christ, of whom He is not ashamed;[3] they, and not angels, are the conspicuous agents in carrying on the purposes of God in redemption.[4]

This judgment of God concerning the exalted rank and worth of man presents a striking contrast when compared with the estimate which men generally place upon themselves and their fellows. True, the Bible does not extol human goodness. It finds man fallen into ruin; more deeply fallen still below what he might have been, and in deepest depth of all below what he may become. It is his high rank, and his unmeasured possibilities upon which the Word of God insists, and these are the facts which are so often ignored. Men incline to regard themselves as a kind of second edition of brutes. They practice accordingly, giving reign to their animal natures, and treating their fellows as if each was only "the brother of the ox." These

[1] Psa. viii, 4-6. (R. V.) [2] Job vii, 17. [3] Heb. ii, 11.
[4] *Ibid.*, ii, 4, 5.

degrading views of man help to degrade him still further. They sink his ideals, they lower his aims, they cheapen his life, and blind his eyes to his high calling in Christ Jesus. If right ideas of God are essential to true religion, truthful ideas of man are equally necessary to intelligent piety and proper manhood.

If low notions of man cheapen life and work unrighteousness, the Divine declarations concerning him work towards his elevation and salvation. They lift him up into the thoughts of God. They point to the life which man was made to live, and the fellowship with his Maker which he is capable of enjoying. Civilizations are higher or lower according to their practical estimates of human interests. Wrongs against man disappear only as the worth of man comes to be realized. Reforms are born of awakened convictions concerning the value of human well-being. Slavery fell when the Negro was seen to be, not a chattel, but a man. The rising war against the barbarism of the liquor traffic is inspired by an apprehension of the fact that man is too valuable to be burned to a cinder in the fires of his appetites, or to be made the beast of burden on which godless greed may ride into ill-gotten wealth.

Those religions in which man stands as a thing and not as a person, neither elevate nor save the race. The gospel itself can not be explained but upon the assumption of the infinite worth of man, and Christianity is propagated with becoming earnestness only where this worth is recognized.

Illustrations of the Divine estimate of man are not hard to find.

1. *This world was made for man.* Science and the Bible agree in this, and there is no meaning to the world upon any other supposition. It was a long journey through which the Creator took this earth of ours, from star-dust, through molten sea to cooling crust, and blooming vegetation; but the journey was made for man. All the cataclysms and transformations, the submergences and upheavals, all the living and the perishing were only a preparation for the coming and life of man. They were the prophecy that such a being as man was to take possession of the world. The coal mines, so long in construction, are but the bunkers in which Divine Providence stored the fuel needful for his comfort and development. No other being which has lived on the earth could have discovered either its existence or its uses. Man is a lover of knowledge; study is a condition of his improvement, and

the world in which he lives is filled with mysteries which tempt his curiosity and excite his power of invention. He is an æsthetic being, and his world-home is adorned with exhibitions of art, which are beyond the power of human genius to conceive. The beautiful, the sublime, and the useful, which could appeal to no other being on the earth but himself, are continually speaking to him in the language of God. While you are reading this book you are seemingly at rest, and yet you are moving at a rate of speed a thousand times higher than that of the railroad train. No king or millionaire can boast of such a chariot as that in which you are this moment seated. Rapid as is its movement, incalculable as is its freightage, no axle breaks, the power never fails; and though passing unnumbered trains, through all the ages there has been no collision. And what meaning is there to all this? For whom is all this infinite outlay of skill and power? Why should the Creator have brought the world through all this marvelous history? Why has He so nicely adapted it to the highest necessities of man? Is it not to tell us that, as He estimates values, the well-being of man is weightiest of all? The world was made for man; possibly the worlds were made for him.

2. *Man stands as the climax in creation.* Here again the Bible and science teach the same. Both maintain that creation has proceeded from the lower orders to the higher. The history of animal life upon this planet of ours has been a long one, and has never been fully read; but this much is certain: man appeared latest in the order of time; he is a "sixth-day" product.[5] The movement in creation being from the lower orders to the higher, man appearing last, is highest in rank; he stands at the head. Agassiz has somewhere said that the spinal cord in the earliest vertebrates was horizontal, the elevation of the head not being above the level of the backbone. In orders which appeared later, the extremity of the spine, which we call the brain, was lifted from the horizontal towards the perpendicular. As the process went on other forms appeared with oblique spines; but at each step the spinal angle approached more nearly the perpendicular. In man alone the vertical spinal cord was reached. As there can be nothing more perpendicular than perpendicular, this would seem to indicate that man not only stands at the head of creation now, but also that he is the final term in the ascending series. No higher order will supersede

[5] Gen. i, 26–31.

him. On, on through the coming ages, the highest created being in the universe will be man, man redeemed and lifted up to the Divine idea of manhood. The "new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness,"[6] will be peopled with the redeemed from among men. If "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together," it is because it awaits "the manifestation of the sons of God."[7] Highest in rank among the creatures of God, no other wears such honor, no other bears such responsibilities, or is within reach of equal privileges. And here is indicated God's estimate of His creature—man.

3. Turn to the only record of creation which we have, and what is there indicated in reference to the rank of man as a creature of God? This record is brief beyond parallel; whole ages drop down between the lines. Mountain-peaks of the story only are seen; but when the creation of man is reached, the account is given in detail. "And God said, Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man

[6] 2 Pet. iii, 13. [7] Rom. viii, 19-22.

in His own image; in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them."[8] This drawn-out account of the creation of man, so in contrast with what goes before it, reads as if inspiration itself was taking a long breath and saying, "Now is revealed what all these ages and this infinite labor has been for. Now is given the whole interpretation of creation." "Man is the fulfillment of the prophecies of all ages."[9]

This record states that man was invested with dominion over all the lower orders in creation—God's representative on earth. Facts echo the statement. Man began his career among animals, which in size and strength, were greatly his superiors. He drove the bear and lion from their resorts, and appropriated their dwelling-places to his own use. He invented weapons before which his monster enemies could not stand. As his race has spread over the earth, the beasts of the field have fled before him, or they have been made to do him service. They have perished, but man remains. They have been limited to certain areas of the earth's surface, and, in the presence of great climatic changes, have become extinct. Man lives in all countries, and survives all catastrophes, and his

[8] Gen. i, 26, 27.

[9] Walks and Talks in the Geological Field, p. 302.

dominion becomes more and more complete as centuries pass.

The record states that God made man in His own image. This can not refer to his physical form, and yet in this even there is an intimation of man's supreme rank in creation. In his erect posture nature seems to have completed a period in that direction. No other being than man needed such a body, and no other could have availed itself of its manifold uses. In systems or idolatrous worship the gods are represented by brute forms; but in the religion of the Bible this is never the case. In the theophanies of the Old Testament the human form only was used as the vehicle of Divine manifestation, and in the New Testament and in Christian art of all ages, angels are represented as in human form. Our Lord himself "was made in the likeness of man."[10]

This image of God in which man was created evidently refers, not to his outward form, but to his essential self. Like his Creator, he is a spirit. He knows and feels and wills. He remembers, and thus lives in the past. He can speak and reveal his thoughts. Like his Creator, man is invisible; we see only the house in which he lives—the machinery

[10] Phil. ii, 7.

with which he touches the external world. Man is mind; he can think and reason. The marvelous achievements of modern science are but the product of human thinking. "Man leaps from star to star, as hunters step from bog to bog in crossing a morass."[11] He alone among the creatures of the earth is incapable of indefinite improvement. This is the index finger which points to his immortality. In outward form man stands at the point of completion. But with this finishing of the physical, nature seems to have begun a new ascending series in the mental. Here no index points to a termination. Mind does not halt in its development.

This record of creation places man in relations which involve consequences of incalculable importance. He is installed as the head of the fundamental institution of society—the family. He is associated with God in the perpetuation of his species. His relations are such that he transmits to following generations his physical characteristics and mental tendencies. In living one life he lives many lives. Once in the world, he never gets out of it. He sends down the current of human blood the taints of his vices or the purer influence of a well-ordered life.

[11] Man's Value in Society, p. 102.

This image of God includes the perilous endowment of moral freedom. Man originates his own moral acts. He is not the helpless victim of his environment. He is not compelled to sin, and no power in earth or heaven can *force* him to stop sinning. He can say *yes* to God everywhere and always, and he can everlastingly say *no*. No strength of temptation can ever oblige him to do wrong, and no amount of persuasion can compel him to do right. In this world and in all worlds he carries the responsibility of his own conduct and destiny. God reasons with him, but claims no power to invade the freedom of his will. He can choose, intend, purpose, as he shall elect, despite all the seductions of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and in the face of all the tender expostulations of friends and the entreaties of the Holy Spirit. God appeals to man's ideas of justice, of right and wrong, as if they must be the same with His own, but concedes his freedom in accepting or rejecting His commands and promises. In the exercise of this exalted power, man can unite himself to God or forever separate himself from Him.

Man's capacity for happiness and misery are in proportion to his greatness. The more exalted his nature, the higher and more intense may be his

enjoyments, and the more deep and appalling may be his sufferings. There are some forms of animal life so low down in the scale of being that they give little or no evidence of a capacity of physical suffering. Higher in the scale this capacity increases, and it is highest of all in man. The higher in the scale, the greater the capacity for enjoyment, and here as elsewhere, man stands at the highest point. Physical pain, fearful as it can be, and sometimes is, is the least of his possible sufferings, as pleasures of sense are the smallest of his possible enjoyments. With conscience and reason and memory and sense of obligation, man is endowed with all the conditions of the highest blessedness or of the deepest wretchedness. What wonder that God should regard his welfare with all the yearnings of infinite love?

4. God is revealed to the world in many ways. He is the speaking God. He speaks in His works and in His Word. Every truly Christian soul does, in a measure, reveal God. But the highest revelation of God is in Jesus Christ. He is the Word of God—the spoken God. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son."[12] Jesus says Himself, "He that hath

[12] Heb. i. 1.

seen Me, hath seen the Father."[13] We make no attempt at philosophizing here. Like a multitude of facts, the number of which the study of both science and revelation is constantly increasing, this fact involves mystery. Let it suffice to say that we do not teach as some of our unbelieving critics represent, that Jesus Christ was *God plus man,* nor that He was *man plus God.* We hold that He was *the God-man.* Neither a second God, nor a double Person; but God manifested in man. Man, then, is of such an exalted nature that in him God can disclose Himself to the world. God can live in a human life. We can know who and what God is in knowing Jesus Christ. There was some good reason why, "not of angels doth He take hold, but He taketh hold of the seed of Abraham."[14] His first strong grasp of humanity was in His incarnation. Verily, the image of God in which man was created must be very real. The relationship of God to man, and of man to God is not appreciated. The possible fellowship between the child and the Divine Father must rise far above our usual visions of glory. This fellowship, broken off by sin, with every man awaits restoration in the willing acceptance of Jesus Christ. And what does this say in reference to the nature

[13] John xiv, 9. [14] Heb. ii, 16. (R. V.)

and worth of man? What possibilities of spiritual life, and of everlasting union with the Father of our spirits! Who can measure the magnitude of the disaster when a human soul loses intercourse with God? The Bible strikes the exact truth when it declares that a soul who has lost God is himself *lost*. Who shall wonder that the God of love has pronounced His sacrifice and suffering in Jesus Christ as fitting in order to win man back to Himself. And who that catches but a glimpse of the infinite worth of man can longer marvel that the Holy Son of God consented to take upon Him the anguish of Gethsemane, and the agonies of the cross, thinking only of the joy that was set before Him—the joy of redeeming the lost race of man to God.

Unbelievers have sometimes said that Jesus Christ was only a good man; no more Divine than other men, excepting that He was better than most men. But what must humanity be to have produced even one such character and life as that of Jesus of Nazareth? If Jesus was human and no more, why has humanity, through all its history, failed to bring forth another? On the other hand, if the Christ of the New Testament be real, He is Divine. Then what must man be to have received such a manifestation of God upon a human plane, and what

must be man's relation and likeness to God to have rendered the fact of the incarnation possible?

Remarks.

1. Low estimates of the rank and value of man are damaging to the character and life of those who accept them. Many seem to enjoy whatever degrades man as a creature of God. They dwell upon his infant helplessness; they mock the frailty and brevity of his life; they ridicule his ignorance, and they gloat over his animalism. They have little to say of his high origin, or of a possible destiny still higher. They make nothing of his nobility of nature, or of the coronation with which he was introduced to the headship of the world. His faults are paraded and laughed at from the platform; he is cartooned in the public press and burlesqued in the theater.

Estimating man thus, they treat him accordingly. They attach little importance to what he is or what he may become. They have small pity for his fallen condition, and less expectation of his permanent reformation. Not a few make merchandise of his honor, and grow rich upon his vices. They make nothing of God's estimate of man. True, we now see man in ruins. His sins, with all their weight of

woe, are upon him. But like a broken statue, he tells of what he might have been, and predicts what he may become. For the one who may read these lines we devoutly pray, "Lord, open his eyes, that he may see what God thinks of him." This blest vision will reveal the greatness of life, and make room in the heart for the yearnings of a loving Savior over His children lost.

2. We have said that man, in his present state, is a spirit in a body—an angel in a brute. This fact places us face to face with a practical problem of surpassing importance to every individual of the race. Which of these factors in our nature shall become the ruling element is the question of questions with every one of us. If the animal becomes dominant we go down. If the spirit gains and maintains the victory over the flesh, we go up. No law of physical science is more certain in its action and results than this. If revelation had been silent upon the subject, the fact would be no less true. Here is a battle which none of us can escape. Coward or hero, you are forced to stand upon this field. As truly as Paul fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, every man has a lion to fight. In the Church or out of it, he is summoned to this encounter. With none of us will it be a drawn battle. It is to conquer or

to be conquered. To be victorious is life; to be defeated is death. It will not help us in this conflict to stay out of the Church; it will be fatal to us to reject the help of Christ. *You will never win this battle alone.*

3. In the boundless beyond man will evidently stand higher or he will fall lower than any other created being. Last made, he is highest made. He is incapable of any ordinary destiny. For him the worlds were made and furnished; for him the Bible was written; for him Christ died. Through him the problem of sin and redemption is to be wrought out. Heaven rejoices over his repentance; angels minister to him in his earthly pilgrimage. All this means corresponding outcome. To be one of the human race is great; it is grand, and it is awful. And through all the ages to come, it will be greater and more glorious still, or more terrible to have been a man, made in the image of God, and redeemed through Jesus Christ.

"We, for whose sake all nature stands,
And stars their courses move;
We, for whose guard the angel bands
Come flying from above;

We, for whom God the Son came down,
And labored for our good;
How careless to secure that crown
He purchased with his blood!"[15]

[15] Meth. Hymnal, No. 547.

VIII.

DOUBTING.

"And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted."—Matt. xxviii, 17.

The appearances of our Lord to His disciples after His resurrection were generally unannounced and unexpected. The one alluded to in the text is an exception. The place, and proximately the time, had been fixed by previous appointment. Probably upwards of five hundred gathered on the "mountain in Galilee." They saw Him; He conversed with them and the greater part of the number were alive to tell the delightful story when Paul wrote his First Epistle to the Corinthians.

Many of the company recognized Him, and prostrated themselves before Him. A few doubted. It was a great thing to believe, that one whom they knew to have been dead, was alive and speaking to them. It seemed too good to believe. Probably some looked upon Him there for the first time, and

He may not have presented the appearance which they had anticipated. To those who had seen Him often before the crucifixion, He must have appeared quite unlike His former self. It argued well for the reasonableness of this company that some doubted. They were not credulous; they did not believe merely because others did; they looked the matter up for themselves. As a result their doubts were temporary, and it is to the credit of the writer of this Gospel that he could write the facts in the case, though they seemed to reflect upon those of his own company.

Christ is still in the world, worshiped by many, but by some doubted. Christianity has been in the world for a long time. It has made marvelous headway against great obstacles. The number of those who accept it as of Divine authority has been constantly increasing, and yet there are those who doubt. If the honest doubter could see *why he doubts,* it might lead him to believe. We will try to give the reasons *why some people doubt.*

1. We begin our beliefs upon almost all subjects by being taught that certain things are true. At first we do not grasp firmly or widely the reasons which support these truths. Quite possibly we could not do it; it is equally possible that our teachers did

not see fit to give us the reasons which were in their own minds, and it is not improbable that reasons which would satisfy us later on, were not possessed by the teachers themselves. This order of receiving our beliefs at the first through others in whose wisdom and honesty we have confidence is all right. It arises necessarily out of the incapacity of childhood. It is the opportunity of parent and teacher; it is God's arrangement for the salvation of the child.

In the development of the mental life every thoughtful person reaches a period when he seeks reasons for his beliefs. He is no longer satisfied to receive them upon the indorsement of others. This, too, is normal and necessary. Inherited beliefs, do not, as a rule, take a sufficiently strong grip upon the life. It is only when personal convictions are wrought in us that our beliefs mean what they say. Men will toy with their sentiments; their lives are often inconsistent with their creeds; but honest men will die for their convictions.

This period of transition is, with every man, a critical period. Several ways are open before him. He can shut down on investigation, refuse new light, and become a traditionalist, and nothing more. He can make up his mind to believe just as he always has believed. This may result in simple stagnation

In mental and spiritual life. It may lead on further to a narrow and spiteful bigotry, and to a defense of personal beliefs which, in positiveness and vehemence, is in inverse ratio to their depths. To such the criterion of truth is former belief, and the sure mark of a falsehood is that it has been newly discovered.

On the other hand, in this time of questioning, men may leap to the conclusion that every alleged truth for which they can not at once discover ample proof, must be false. They may think it necessary to their self-respect to throw away all they have been taught, simply because it was received through teaching. To them the old is all false, and the new is true so far as it disputes the old. The criterion of truth is antagonism to tradition, and the enemies of the race are the fossils who believe as their fathers did. There is a middle way into which these questioning souls should be guided; viz., the way of calm, fearless, and thorough investigation. This period of hunger for personal convictions should be respected. An honest doubter is likely to become a confirmed believer.

If he is told that because he doubts he is a sinner and an infidel; that, if anything can, will lead him to be both. I have often heard it said that the trend

of thought in the better class of our young men is towards infidelity. I do not believe the statement. Our thinking young men are *seeking intellectual rest in religious belief*. There is no good reason why they should be rebuked for this. When the young man goes home from his school with his head full of new questions, questions born of his quickened intellectual vigor, gives his Christian testimony with fewer adjectives, and less emotional fervor, let his pastor and Christian friends beware how they tell him that he has become backslidden, and is half way a skeptic. He knows it is not true. He is after reasons for his faith. Help him, and he will get them, and when he has them, he will be worth a score of those who have never thought enough to make a doubt possible. "Doubt well, young man, and then believe forever."

2. Doubting is often the result of a feeling that there is less responsibility in doubting than in believing. Much historical and scientific truth is readily accepted, for if it be true, no change is required in us because of it. It is not so with religious truth. When a man accepts the doctrine of a Personal God as true, he can not stop there. He can not say, "That is nothing to me." He must go on and ask, in reference to His nature and His relation to

himself. He must do something about it, or he must stand self-convicted in the presence of his own belief. It is an uncomfortable position to stand arraigned at the bar of one's own convictions of truth. Men seek to escape the self-accusation involved in such a mental attitude. They do not want the responsibility of denying the truth of Christianity; they know what it means to admit its Divine origin, and it is a relief to them to seem to occupy a middle ground where they neither affirm nor deny, but only doubt. It is all the easier for them to assume this attitude, because they can say that they have never had opportunity to investigate the subject sufficiently to warrant a positive belief either way. A moment's thought should convince us that there is no such middle ground as the doubter supposes. The doubter must take the responsibility of his doubts. His doubts lead him to treat Christianity as if it were false. If his doubts have any meaning, they mean that the truth of Christianity is not proven. If his doubts have no basis in reason they are a self-imposed fraud; if they have a reasonable basis, then Christianity is unreasonable. In any case, he takes all the responsibility which he would take in either accepting or rejecting it. Nor has he, as an honest man, the right to push the religion of

Christ aside as unworthy of his first attention. In that he assumes the responsibility of practically rejecting it.

5. Doubting often arises from ignorance of the Bible. This applies first of all to the cheap jesters and retailers of infidel jibes and sarcasms. They have, perhaps, read an infidel tract, or heard a lecture in the same line; they know not how to answer the criticisms upon the Bible which they hear or read, for they know little or nothing of the Bible itself. They have not read it; they do not even know how to study it. It would be amusing, if it were not so serious in its results, to hear men talking pompously of the contradictions and inconsistencies of the Bible when, to save their souls, they can not distinguish between prophets and evangelists, nor the books in the Old Testament from those in the New. Is it any wonder that men, thus ignorant of what they talk about, are led into doubt? We do not mean that men must become profound scholars in order to know that Christianity is from God; they need be little more than honest men, in earnest to know and live the truth. But we do say that, before men proceed to pronounce the evidences of Christianity inadequate, and the faith of God's Church for thousands of years a delusion, they

should take pains to know something of the Book which contains the question at issue. The Bible does not ask to be let alone; it asks no quarter at any honest man's hands. It courts investigation; the more the better, if it be done to find out the truth. But for any man to bandy it about with ridicule and flippant criticism, while ignorant of its contents, is an impeachment of his honor and a prayer for self-delusion.

Nor does this charge of ignorance concerning the contents of the Scriptures lie exclusively against the rabble of infidelity. It is surprisingly just as against some of the leading doubters of the past and the present time.[1] Edward Gibbon was the author of a work entitled "A History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." The books are saturated with insinuations against the Christian religion. The author is somewhat boastful of his painstaking thoroughness in the matter of authorities, and yet he admitted that he made up his mind in reference to the Bible by reading the Gospel of John and one chapter in Luke. What chance did he give himself to know what was in the Bible? When David Hume wrote his "History of England," he let slip no opportunity of hurling a dart at the religion of the Bible; but he told Samuel Johnson

[1] Unbelief in Eighteenth Century, p. 25, etc.

that he had never read the Bible with attention—not even the New Testament. Thomas Paine wrote a book misnamed "The Age of Reason." The book is a scurrilous attack upon the Bible, and in a style which panders to the rabble. I have heard young men speak of it as a book which "shows up the Bible." And yet this book shows that Paine did not know who were the twelve apostles, and when his misquotations were published, he defended himself by saying, "I had forgotten just how the printers left that passage, *for I keep no Bible.*" And the man who for years trod the platforms of this country as the most irreverent assailant of the Bible and Christianity since Voltaire, when asked by a reporter, "Have you made the Bible the subject of thorough study?" replied in these words, "I have read the Bible some, and I have heard it talked about a good deal." We do these men no injustice in pronouncing them ignorant of the Bible. They manifest an equal ignorance of the religion which it teaches. Books on Christian evidences are numerous. They range from five-cent tracts to massive volumes. How many of these has the average doubter read? What wonder that men doubt so long as they consent to remain ignorant of what the Bible is and what it teaches?

4. In this question of the Divine element in the Bible and of the Divine origin of the Christian religion, men often demand a form of evidence which is not applicable in the case, and because this is not given, they doubt. They call for demonstration. They want to know Christian truth as they know that five times five are twenty-five. They wish for evidence which will compel belief. In the demand for this kind of evidence there are errors. The form of evidence, which we call demonstration, can apply to only one class of truths; viz., mathematical truth. It is confined wholly to truths which relate to magnitudes and numbers. The thousand and one truths upon which we practice in daily life are none of them capable of demonstration, and yet men would be regarded as unbalanced if they did not accept them. Besides, truths demonstrated are not *believed; they are known.* There is a difference between belief and knowledge, though that which is believed may be as true as that which is known. That two parallel lines can not inclose a space is not a belief; it is knowledge. When apprehended by the mind, it is impossible not to know it. Belief is based upon moral evidence, and there is often a moral element in believing. Moral states have a part in forming be-

lief. Compelled belief has no moral element. The want of demonstration is no excuse for doubting.

5. A corrupted Christianity has led many to become doubters. In periods in which the Church has lost spirituality, and in which her ministry has been unfaithful and worldly, unbelievers have been multiplied. The more intelligent classes in a whole nation have at times recoiled from the Church, and thus from what they had mistaken for the religion of Christ. Witness the condition of France at the present time. In communities in which there are Church quarrels and alienations among those who profess to be Christians; where business men in the Church are full of greed and sharp practices; and where the life of the Church is frivolous and self-pleasing, there will be many doubters. A backslidden Church and a self-seeking ministry is the soil in which unbelief flourishes. The same fact appears in the lives of individuals. Employees in the service of men who claim to be Christians, sometimes find that their employers deceive their customers, and instruct them to do the same. They find them greedy of gain and hard-fisted towards those who serve them; they charge these inconsistencies to religion, and turn away unbelievers. In homes where piety is coupled with harshness and ill-tempers;

where criticism and fault-finding are served with the daily meals; where the Bible and prayer are supplanted by games and novels; where professions are large and practical life is small; in such homes children and servants will count it a luxury to be doubters. It is said of the Emperor Julian, who put forth all his strength in an effort to crush Christianity and re-establish Paganism in the Roman Empire, that he was turned against the religion of the cross by the wrongs which he suffered at the hands of those who avowed the Christian faith.

6. The occasions of doubt are not unfrequently in the doubter himself. There is in some a pride in doubting. The silly notion is entertained that doubt signifies that one is profound and original, as if faith was not as original as unfaith. Some gratuitously assume that faith and reason are opposites; that they exclude each other. They appear to think that, to believe is to assent without evidence, but that to disbelieve is to act reasonably. Faith, they would have us believe, is imitative, while unbelief is original. All this is sheer assumption; it has not the merit of plausibility, but it operates in many minds to dignify doubt. To conceive of one's self as a superior thinker, or as the follower of those who are original and profound, is flattering to in-

tellectual pride. There is a state of mind which desires that Christianity may be proven false. It wishes to free itself from the authority of Divine revelation. Christianity accuses men of sin; some resent the charge, and place themselves in the attitude of striking back. The desire to have Christianity untrue becomes father to the thought. They reason according to desire instead of desiring according to reason. Such will easily doubt. A wicked life will generate doubt. No man will very long maintain a high creed joined with a low life. He will either bring his life up towards his creed, or his life will drag down his creed towards its level. Sensuality kills the moral sense. That men who live on the plane of self-gratification should be stupidly unconscious of spiritual realities, is certainly not to be wondered at. That they should mistake this benumbed moral sense for originality or "advanced thought," is indeed surpassingly strange. They should be able to discover that their doubts arise, not from profound thinking, but from a repugnance of feeling towards that authority which demands self-renunciation and a holy life.

7. We have already noted (Sermon V) that there is an overdrawn theory of inspiration which exposes the Bible to technical criticism. This theory

virtually concedes that an error in the Scriptures would overthrow the claim to inspiration. All alleged errors must be regarded as assaults upon the Divine character of the book, and must, in some way, be shown to be correct and harmonious statements of truth. If, in First Kings, we read that the pillars in front of the temple of Solomon were eighteen cubits high, and in Second Chronicles that they were thirty-five cubits, there must, it is thought, be some explanation which will harmonize these figures. This view, wholly unnecessary for the defense of Scripture inspiration, leads to strained interpretations, and unsatisfactory explanations of various passages. These apparently forced explanations are taken to be devices resorted to in order to save the doctrine of inspiration. The inference is that the doctrine itself is lacking in proof. At this point doubts are multiplied, and without cause. The true idea of inspiration, indicated by the Word itself, and implied in the Scriptures, has no need to carry this load of difficulties. It dissolves rather than creates doubt. And is it not strange that men will insist that this yoke of mechanical inspiration shall be put upon the neck of Christian apologetics—a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear?

8. Recent developments in the science of psychology have shown that some of the phenomena, more or less connected with religious experience, are accounted for in philosophical ways. Here new doubts have arisen, and some have been ready to leap to the conclusion that all there is in what Christians call conversion, is only the natural influence of mind upon mind, matter upon mind, and external conditions upon both body and mind. "There goes the supernatural," they say, "and we doubt if there is anything Divine in the conversion of a sinner or the experience of a saint." In this doubt there appears, first of all, the besetting delusion, before alluded to, in the first discourse in this volume; viz., that when we have found out how God works, we take that fact as proof that it is not His work at all. The notion that we must count God out of every effect for which we can assign a secondary cause, and that He is to be counted in only in the miraculous or extraordinary, is a Deistic abomination which should be banished from the thought of every thinking man. What if psychology does reveal the fact that certain mental phenomena connected with conversions can be traced to specific causes? That does not remove God from either the effects or the causes.

Besides, it is well if we have come to know that

changes in religious feelings, so often construed as the criteria of fundamental moral changes, are not always the result of the bestowment or the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit. Light has long been needed upon this subject. We need it to enable ministers and people to distinguish what is real and essential in conversion from what is superficial and incidental. Our converts would be more genuine and less fluctuating in their experiences. Our Churches would now be filled with more spiritual fiber had this light been clear upon us in years gone by. There is little doubt that we have overlooked much of the work of the Holy Spirit among us, because we have recognized nothing as His working which did not appear in certain manifestations which we had fixed for Him in our thought. And there is just as little doubt that, in our religious exercises and services, we sometimes attribute to Him that to which He has no other relation than He has to all other mental and physical phenomena. For all the light which psychology has shed upon this subject, Christians above all others, should be grateful to God. It is a light shining in, what to thousands has been a dark place in experience. There is no suggestion of doubt here. And after we have gathered in all the light we can get from mental sci-

ence, we only see a little more clearly how God works in saving men. He works by law in both nature and grace. He brings man into fullest co-operation with Himself. In every genuine conversion an orphan soul finds his Father; a lost son returns and is received into communion with God.

9. Reader, in the last analysis, your doubts come from a cold unconsciousness of God. Were this removed from your heart, all other sources of doubt would be powerless. God made you to know Him; He wants you to live with Him; He wants to live with you. You may become as conscious of Him as you are of yourself. You may walk the street, live in your home, and stand in your place of business, knowing always that He is with you. In such a companionship your doubts will melt away like an April snow. You may question and argue till the day of doom, and still be harassed with the ghosts of your unbelief. The one final cure of your doubting is to know God. The way is through Christ; at His feet the Holy Spirit will meet you; He will show you to yourself; He will introduce you to Christ? Have you tested this? If you have, you know I am telling you the truth. If you have not, come, and you shall doubt no more forever.

IX.

UNBELIEF IN CHRISTIAN PEOPLE.

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."—Heb. iii, 12.

The chapter in which this text stands makes reference to an important event recorded in Old Testament history.[1] In their journey from Egypt to Canaan, the Hebrews had reached a point near the southern border of the Promised Land. Here they sent forward twelve men with orders to make observations concerning the country and the people, and report the result to headquarters. At the expiration of forty days these scouts returned, bringing with them specimens of the fruits of the land. At first all agreed that the country was charming and bountiful in its products. But ten of the number presented a most discouraging picture of the difficulties in the way of possessing it. They

[1] Num. xii, 14.

had seen walled cities, and the sight was new to them. They had caught sight of military fortifications and disciplined soldiers. These soldiers appeared to them to be remarkably large and strong, and they realized that the enginery necessary for the reduction of such strong defenses was not in the Hebrew camp.

The congregation had been waiting for more than a month in a state of excited expectation, and when they heard these unfavorable tidings, brought in by ten of the spies, they swung to the opposite extreme of utter discouragement. Two faithful men of the number attempted to still the despairing cries of the multitude, but were unable to stay the tide of disheartened feeling. The fitful crowd were first for stoning their leaders and returning to Egypt, and then for attacking their enemies contrary to orders, and without prospect of success.

The true inwardness of this story is opened up by the writer of this Epistle to the Hebrews. It was not the city walls, formidable as they must have been to men armed only with swords and bows; it was not the number or the giant stature of the Canaanitish soldiers which stood in the way of their conquest of the land; it was the fact that they did not believe that God would do as He had said He would.

By their unbelief they had separated themselves from the leadership of God. They could not conquer their enemies without Him. It was their unbelief which caused their failure, and doomed them to a long and wasting pilgrimage in the desert. Moses saw this fact, and, in his farewell address, explained to them that their prolonged wilderness journey was brought upon them because they "did not believe the Lord their God."[2] The writer of this epistle says, "So we see they could not enter in because of unbelief."[3]

Using this as a memorable instance in which the unbelief of a few worked the ruin of many, he exhorts Christian believers who, like the Hebrews in the wilderness, are called to meet difficulties, and to do what is impossible to them unless led and attended by the presence of God, to take heed, lest they, too, give way to unbelief, and thus separate themselves from their Divine Leader.

Of unbelief as a theoretical rejection of the Bible and the Christian faith, we have spoken in the preceding discourse. There is another aspect of unbelief, however, which is hardly less serious to the cause of Christ. It is the practical unbelief of Christians themselves. They accept Christianity; they

[2] Deut. i, 32. [3] Heb. iii, 19.

believe the Bible; they admit that God speaks to men; that He has made promises, but they treat His promises as unreliable. They would be shocked to be told that they had ever manifested any want of confidence in the honesty and sincerity of Jesus Christ, and yet they do treat Him as if He does not mean what He says. This exhortation of the apostle is to such as profess belief in God and faith in Christ as a Savior, but who, in the presence of difficulties, fail in courage, and, through unbelief, separate themselves from the living God. Let us look for some of the more common manifestations of this form of unbelief.

1. We have not far to go to find good people who have little confidence that right will triumph in this world against wrong. They see that money and cunning and numbers are often enlisted on the side of wrong, and they are quite sure that these obstacles are so great that they can not be overcome. They hate the atrocious evils which they see intrenched in custom and godless greed; but they say their removal can not be accomplished. They wish that reforms could triumph; but they have no real expectation that they ever will; at least, not within an indefinitely long time. Good people talked this way in reference to slavery; they

knew it was wicked, but what could be done about it? It could never be abolished; it would destroy the Union to attempt it. Some men had faith, and worked on. They believed that God was with and in the right and against the wrong. At one time it looked as though the nation was nearing the borders of emancipation, but reports came in from the newspapers, from Congress, and from the Methodist Discipline that the destruction of slavery was out of the question. Men were soon ready to stone the Abolitionists and to return to the Egyptian bondage of the Fugitive Slave Law. Years were spent in the wilderness of political gaming, and the plague of war fell upon an unbelieving people, and practically wasted a whole generation. We hear the same despairing utterances concerning present evils. Thoughtful men everywhere know that the traffic in intoxicants menaces all that Christians and patriots hold dear; but many will say that it can not be stopped. They see that its defenders are organized; that they are unscrupulous in methods; that every base and wicked thing is marshaled in its support; that politicians truckle to its interests, and they have no faith that it can be exterminated.

These obstacles in the way of reform are very real, and they are very great. The kingdom of God

has always been confronted by great obstacles. Human devisings have never been sufficient for its success. Human strength alone has always been weakness. But our chief difficulty is our unbelief. Do we believe that this world is organized for a glorious outcome of universal righteousness? Do we believe that Jesus Christ is in this world, successfully guiding its history towards this consummation? With this confidence shall we despair of the final result? Difficulties there are; human weakness is very apparent, but human weakness makes room for God. That God who charged all men to beware and not oppress the widow and the fatherless; that God who pronounced a curse upon him who should put the bottle to his neighbor's lips—*that God lives;* and as surely as He lives, the hoary-headed abominations of earth, which have so long corrupted society, and destroyed the bodies and souls of men, *will go down.* The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, which measures difficulties by human rather than by Divine strength.

2. The fear of loss as the result of obeying God is an indication of unbelief. The man who works on Sunday when the Word of God tells him to observe it as a Sabbath rest, does it because he dares

not trust God to direct his business methods. He thinks he can do better for himself than God will do for him. The business man who, from the fear of losing patronage, shuts his mouth over the gross evils in his community, dares not do his duty and trust God to take care of him. Why do young men fear that they can not succeed in life if they are strictly conscientious? Why do men fear that they shall damage their prospects if they ally themselves with unpopular but righteous causes? Why do many young people follow customs which they blush to defend as right? Is it not that they fear the loss of friendships and social standing? These and many other forms of this fear of loss by obeying God, are simply manifestations of unbelief. Such persons are unwilling to obey Christ and trust His guidance and protection. They thus separate themselves, their business, and their social life from Him. As the apostle puts the case, they depart from the living God.

The old Hebrew kings, with a few exceptions, did not dare to trust Jehovah to direct in the management of state affairs; they thought they must keep on good terms with the gods of the nations. The penalty came in the destruction of their kingdoms. The difference between the false prophets

and the true was prominently this: the former cringed before any apparent loss as a consequence of speaking God's messages; the other were true to their commission, and trusted Jehovah to take care of them. We dislike to admit that any professed minister of the gospel will trim his ministry to a worldly policy from fear of loss in doing his duty. Were there not too much evidence that such cases exist, we would withhold the insinuation. Wherever the case exists, it is one of the most lamentable manifestations of unbelief. We do not deny that, in all these cases, faithfulness may involve temporary suffering, but with Christians, the greatest of all losses is the loss of conscious integrity before God. He is no minister of Christ who parts with this. His ministry will from that time be a corpse from which the spirit and life have fled. A frigid eloquence may for a time linger upon his lips, but his real gifts will die, paralyzed by his unbelief.

3. When a Church and pastor cease to expect the conversion of souls through the ordinary means of grace, it is a manifestation of unbelief. We need not stop to prove that such instances exist; they are numerous. In many Churches little effort seems to be put forth for the salvation of men, excepting

at periods of special services. The members appear to think that if the Church can hold its own till another "revival-meeting," it is all that can be looked for. In the meantime the gospel is preached, and various services are held fifty-two Sundays in the year; prayer-meetings, class-meetings, and young people's meetings are conducted every week, but with little or no expectation that any one will be awakened and led to Christ through these means. By a kind of common consent, something of an unusual character must be arranged in order to bring persons to a sense of sin and salvation. Meetings must be increased in number to five or ten in a week, and extraordinary attractions must be announced before conversions can be expected.

We do not wish to be understood as teaching that there are not appropriate times for protracted meetings. Such services have often been greatly blest, and it is also true that instances can be easily cited in which they have closed, leaving the Church more dead and the community more hard than when they began. But why should the expectation of conversions be limited to these special occasions? Is it anywhere revealed that the Holy Spirit works with a Church only in special meetings? If the minister be a man of God, and a preacher of the gospel, will

not the Holy Spirit be in his ministry constantly? If he teaches his people to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded, does not the promise, "Lo, I am with you always" (all the days), mean the minister now? Can a Church prescribe the time and place and way in which the Holy Spirit will work upon the souls of men? If "altar services" are thought to be absolutely essential, can they not be held at one time as well as another? And to whom has it been revealed that men can not be led to Christ in any other place than the church building? It would seem that some Churches have little confidence in the reality of conversions unless the persons have come out in the traditional place and way. The fact is, we are attempting to do our Christian work too exclusively inside the doors of our churches. Special seasons of home visitation may result in as great good as special services in the church. Half the time and labor used in a series of meetings, given by the Church and her minister to home evangelization, would often result in greater and more permanent good. In not a few cases it would prove effectual with persons who would never be at an altar service or even in a protracted meeting. We shall not solve the problem of "the Church and the masses" till the Church goes after the

masses. We venture to predict that hundreds of men and women in our congregations would be brought to Christ every year if the work of the Holy Spirit, in the ordinary services of the Church was sought out and diligently followed up. The Holy Spirit is constantly at work in our congregations and communities. We are to work with Him, adopt His way; not insist that He shall come to ours. Not a Sunday in the year, if the minister means what he says, and the Church realizes her mission to men, but souls will be hunted out by the Spirit of God and brought to know their need of Christ. Then why should the expectation of conversions ever cease in the life of a Church? Why should it be limited to a special season of a few weeks in the year, a season designated frequently more by the signs of the zodiac than by "the sound of going in the tops of the mulberry-trees."[1] If we are not mocking the Holy Ghost in repeating the Apostles' Creed, we should expect His presence in the services of to-day, next Sunday, next Thursday evening—*all days and all evenings.* Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of us—ministers and members—an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

4. Unbelief is manifested in individual religious

[1] 2 Sam. v, 24.

life in a hunger for external marvels and internal sensations. Like the unbelieving Jews, many unbelieving Christians seek after a sign. They want something to indicate that God is as good as His word. They do not feel that it is altogether safe to trust God for what He is, or for what He says. In personal religious life their desires are centered upon a blessing—an experience. They conceive of a religious experience as something which Christ *does,* rather than as something which *He is* to the soul and life of the believer. They have some faith in prayer, still more in religious feeling, and most of all in instances of physical prostration and cases of faith-cure.

Their faith keeps just one step away from the Savior Himself. If they were told that these longings for inward and outward marvels were indications of unbelief rather than of faith, they would think it an unpardonable severity of criticism; but such is the case. Faith receives *a personal Christ.* It goes with Him; stands with him; relies upon Him. When one begins to lean upon some impersonal "it," be the it external miracle or inward state, he that moment begins to unloose his hold on Christ. It is just at this point that many have given way to an evil heart of unbelief.

5. Unbelief may be recognized in the legal state in which many professed Christians live. Their religious life consists in making resolutions to do better. They fail and fail again, until, in moments of despair, they feel that they have not the face to tell God that they expect to do any better than they have done. Duty is to them, not only difficult, but irksome and unwelcome. They try doing this and doing that, as experiments, hoping for help in means, but finding all unsatisfactory. Conscience is to them not so much a guide as a goad. Now, what is the cause of all this bondage and misery—this Mount Sinai experience of blackness and darkness and tempest? Whether they know it or not, these struggling souls are attempting to meet the demands of the law in their own persons and strength. Their unbelief has separated them from the living Christ, and they are alone in their weakness and bondage. Would they for one moment cast away all their works, experiences, promises, feelings—everything but the living Christ—the day of their deliverance would dawn. They would see that, in having Him, they have all. It is their unbelief which keeps them trusting in *things* rather than in Him, "of Whom and through Whom and to Whom are all things."[5]

[5] Rom. xi, 36.

6. It is unbelief that leads persons to think that, in their religious lives, there are special and insuperable difficulties. They think others have fewer obstacles in their way, and can get on more successfully than they. They view themselves as peculiar, and their circumstances as unusually embarrassing. Their natural disposition is against them; their tempers are magazines of fury; they have special trials at home; they have old habits which betray them; their business leads them into associations with wicked men; for these and a hundred other hindrances, which they deem peculiar in their force upon themselves, they half justify much in themselves which is not Christian. Their halting and sinning is, they think, what is to be expected of those of their make-up and surroundings. Let us admit all these difficulties, and many more if we will; still the notion that there are any cases so peculiar that Christ has not made full provision for them, is purely a suggestion of an evil heart of unbelief. Reader, you are counting yourself to be separate from the living God. What are your difficulties when placed in the hands of an Almighty Savior? Can you be anywhere or under any conditions in which Christ is not enough for you? Will He fail you when you cast yourself upon Him? As

well say that the Gospel was not meant for you, and that the plan of salvation did not take you in. When Jesus died saying, "It is finished,"[6] He had His eyes upon you. He knew where you would live, what would be your constitution and your surroundings. He knew what habits you would have to break up, what trials and temptations would come upon you; yes, He knew it all, and yet He said, with you in His eye, *"It is finished."* Will you look at Him and say, "He can not do it in my case?" This is unbelief; it separates you from the living Christ. It is not a misfortune; it is a neglect; it is sin. Let us haste to His feet; confess that we have dishonored Him by distrusting His love and power, and cast ourselves upon Him for time and eternity.

[6] John xix, 30.

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: May 2006

PreservationTechnologies
A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION
111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 017 658 546 8